



**CASA Forum**  
Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Inc

ABN 23 677 085 867

# *Annual Report*

*July 2010 - June 2011*

**CASA Forum** Victorian Centres Against Sexual  
Assault Inc A0029013c

## INTRODUCTION

The *Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum (Victorian CASA Forum)* is a peak body of sixteen (16) Centres Against Sexual Assault including the *Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (After Hours)*.

The Victorian CASA Forum advocates structurally to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual assault have access to comprehensive and timely support and crisis intervention to address their immediate and long-term needs.

CASAs acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of sexual assault are male and overwhelmingly victim/survivors of sexual assault are women and children.

This does not however, deny the incidence of existence of sexual assault perpetrated against men or by women.

CASAs operate from a structuralist feminist analysis of sexual assault. Therefore, CASAs are committed to addressing the gender, cultural, social, economic and class inequalities within society which results in the perpetration of sexual assault and violence against women and children.

CASAs provide an accessible, effective and consistent quality service to victim/survivors of sexual assault with the principles of practice based on an articulated understanding of the causes and consequences of sexual assault.

CASAs operate within the framework of the Victims' Rights Model of service delivery which gives centre place to the rights of victim/survivors. The commitment by CASAs to the Victims' Rights Model of service delivery acknowledges the link between the rights, empowerment and long-term healing for victim/survivors of sexual assault.

Knowledge and understanding of the individual, cultural, social and universal context of the lives of women and children is fundamental to enable services to respond consistently and appropriately to the range and diversity of needs of victim/survivors of sexual assault.

The framework therefore acknowledges that CASAs respond not only to the presenting issues of sexual assault, but also to the victim/survivor's individual experience of it. This includes the emotional, psychological, developmental, economic and social consequences relating to the incidence of sexual assault.

## **VICTORIAN CENTRES AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT FORUM PHILOSOPHY**

The Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum is committed to addressing the inequalities within society which result in the perpetration of sexual violence and family violence against women, children and men. The Victorian CASA Forum therefore acknowledges that:

- Sexual assault is both a consequence and a reinforcer of the power disparity existing between men and women and children.
- Sexual assault occurs along a continuum of behaviour which includes: any uninvited sexual behaviour which makes the recipient feel uncomfortable, harassed or afraid: unwanted touching or remarks: sexual harassment: coerced sexual activity: rape with physical violence and threat to life: sexual assault of children and the grooming of children that accompanies this crime.
- The impact of sexual assault and family violence on the lives of victim/survivors is multi-faceted and complex. It includes emotional, social, psychological, legal, health, spiritual, economic and political consequences. To facilitate recovery from sexual and family violence, the Forum recognises the importance of responding to each aspect.
- Recovery from sexual assault and family violence is influenced by a range of factors reflecting positions of men, women and children in society and the power differences between them. These include difference of gender, culture, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, ability/disability and socio economic class.
- The entire community and other institutions are responsible for sexual assault and its consequences. Working towards its elimination is the responsibility of all in our society.
- All CASAs work toward the empowerment of service users, through a victims' rights model, informed by the Victims Rights Charter and the Human Rights Charter. The focus of service provision is the needs of recent and past victim/survivors of sexual assault.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- **Direct Service**

CASAs will provide best practice services drawing on evidence based clinical practice, research and evaluation.

- **Education**

CASAs will provide information and education is provided to raise community and professional awareness of the nature, incidence and impact of sexual assault and family violence.

- **Prevention**

CASAs will provide advocacy for prevention programs. CASAs will develop, support and participate in programs that work to prevent women, children and men becoming victims of sexual assault and family violence.

- **Advocacy**

CASAs will advocate for systemic reforms and social change to maximise the outcomes for victim survivors of sexual assault and family violence.

## **STRUCTURE**

### **Membership**

The Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum Inc. A0029013C is comprised of representatives from all sixteen CASAs in Victoria including the Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL). The representatives are the Managers of the Regional Centres and the Sexual Assault Crisis Line.

### **Register of Members for 2010-2011**

|                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Shireen Gunn                   | Ballarat CASA              |
| Barbara Henry                  | Barwon CASA                |
| Pauline Gilbert                | CASA House                 |
| Judy Flanagan                  | Eastern CASA               |
| Karen Hogan                    | Gatehouse Centre           |
| Fiona Boyle                    | Gippsland CASA             |
| Judy McHugh                    | Goulburn Valley CASA       |
| Eileen Oates                   | Loddon Campaspe CASA       |
| Joanne Sheehan                 | Mallee SAU                 |
| Charmaine Farrell (April 2010) | Northern CASA              |
| Bonnita Travers                | Sexual Assault Crisis Line |
| Carolyn Worth                  | South Eastern CASA         |
| Helen Wilson                   | South Western CASA         |
| Kerry Burns                    | Upper Murray CASA          |
| Jane Vanderstoel               | West CASA                  |

### **Meetings**

In accordance with the rules of the Incorporated Association, in 2010-2011 the Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum met eleven times and, in addition, held the 2009 -2010 Annual General Meeting in Mildura on Tuesday 14th September 2010, 9.00am. A planning and development day for the CASA Forum was held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010 where a Forum strategic plan was developed. Separate metropolitan and rural managers meetings were held bi monthly. With an ever increasing CASA Forum workload, the need for a Secretariat continues to be an issue.

In 2010-2011 the Forum met bi monthly with Department of Human Services Office for Children and Families Liz Olle, Madeleine Oakes and Jan Thompson.

Presentations to CASA Forum included

- Royal Women's Pregnancy Advisory Service
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre
- AFL
- Lesley Hewitt – Researcher CASA Forum History
- Victims of Crime, Department of Justice
- Lai Angoun – Papua and New Guinea
- Juliet Summers – Young Earth
- Roberts Management Concepts
- Colleen Hartland – Greens Women's Portfolio Holder
- Successworks

### **Public Officer/Convenor**

The Forum appoints a Public Officer in accordance with the rules. The Public Officer is the initial and main contact point for the Forum. In 2009-2010 Carolyn Worth, Manager, SECASA remained the Public Officer/Convenor. Barbara Henry, Manager, Barwon CASA continued in the role of Treasurer of the CASA Forum and Shireen Gunn Manager Ballarat CASA commenced as Co-Convenor of the Forum.

### **Venue**

CASA Forum is indebted to the Inter Country Adoptions Department for the provision of a central meeting place in the CBD, their Board Room 20<sup>th</sup> Floor, 570 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This has been a year when the Forum has been exploring the best structure to enable it to function efficiently and effectively over the next decade. Jean Roberts and Karen Bentley, Roberts Management Concepts Pty Ltd assisted us in looking at whether incorporation is the best option for the Forum legally. Legal advice has also been provided by Freehills' solicitor Anna Lyons. A final decision will be made on this issue in November at the annual Planning Day.

A consultant has been engaged to assist in writing a history of the CASAs in Victoria. This project is anticipated for completion in 2012. In addition, we have documented our Model of Practice and an Executive Summary and full document have been printed for distribution to stakeholders and the general public.

The Forum has made submissions to the Government on a number of issues this year including The Failure to Protect Legislation, Protecting Victorian Vulnerable Children, Inquiry into Access to and Interaction with the Justice System by People with an Intellectual Disability, Breaching Intervention Orders and their Families and Carers, Victorian Law Reform Commission's Reference on Sex Offenders Registration, Medical Board of Australia Consultation on Draft Guidelines on Sexual Boundaries and Baseline Sentencing. There have also been numerous consultations around sexual assault, family violence, women's health issues and the taxi industry inquiry.

The Eliminating Violence Against Women Media Awards (EVAs) were again a huge success.

## **CRISIS CARE:**

- The Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL) manager provided monthly updates of the use of 1800 number.
- SACL coordinated 592 after hours Crisis Care services.
- SACL dealt with 10 303 telephone calls throughout the year.
- CASAs recorded 989 Crisis Care Services to recent victims of Sexual Assault 2010-2011.

SACL has relocated to within the Women's Hospital and has a new data base and telephone system. The staff have been involved in some professional education sessions at CASA House.

## **COUNSELLING SERVICES**

CASAs continue to focus on counselling services to victim/survivors of sexual assault. This year there were 7 590 new referrals. Service activity was recorded against 13 714 cases during the year which was an increase of 26 percent on last year.

The CASAs continued to engage with families where a member had been put on the Sex Offender Register (ANCOR) and there were children present in the household or having contact.

The Better Pathway program funded by the Department of Justice has a focus on reducing women's imprisonment and re-offending. WestCASA and Loddon-Campaspe CASA have continued to provide sexual assault counseling to women in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison. Training is also provided to prison staff to understand the issues associated with sexual assault and its disclosure.

The Making Rights Reality pilot project to improve the CASA response to victims with cognitive impairment has been funded by a number of philanthropic trusts including Portland House Foundation, Reichstein Foundation, Victorian Women's Trust, William Buckland Foundation and the Department of Human Services along with three private donors. This project will look at how to support a victim with a cognitive impairment through the crisis care process, counselling and the judicial system. It will commence at SECASA before being rolled out across the State.

## **SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS TREATMENT SERVICES:**

The Problem Sexual Behaviour (PSB) and Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services (SABTS) continue to be provided by the majority of CASAs across the state.

This program has been developed in conjunction with the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. The Children's Court recommends to the Therapeutic Treatment Board that a young person be placed on a Therapeutic Treatment Order. Treatment is for a period of 12 months unless an extension is applied for.

There were 336 new referrals for children exhibiting problematic sexual behaviours and adolescents demonstrating sexually abusive behaviour.

In addition, approximately 40 young people aged between 15 and 17 years received treatment for sexually abusive behaviour.

Submissions have been made to the Department of Justice to extend the number of places for 15-17 year olds.

A Mentoring Program for staff providing these services has been established to enhance practice and learning. In 2010-2011 it has been in the form of quarterly clinical symposia which are auspiced by CEASE, the Peak Body for the SABTS services and are attached to the Workforce Development Program.

### **ABORIGINAL CULTURAL COMPETENCIES**

Northern CASA has a permanent .6 community development position which has been involved in developing a partnership with key local Aboriginal agencies including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the Aboriginal Unit at Mercy Hospital for women and the Aboriginal Unit at Austin Health. A counsellor/advocate is based one morning a week at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Family Counselling Service. A male counsellor/advocate has been working with Aboriginal men's workers from the region training them to deliver professional training to Aboriginal workers on responding to disclosures of sexual assault.

Charmaine Farrell  
Manager

All CASAs have developed Indigenous Access Plans with their regional Department of Human Service's offices aimed at increasing their involvement with their local Aboriginal communities. CASA Managers also attended the Yarnin' Up Forum at the Aboriginal Advancement League which was aimed at exploring new partnership opportunities between sexual assault services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Family Violence Regional Action Groups and government departments.

Gippsland CASA has allocated two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander portfolios with the aim of allowing time for counsellor/advocates to liaise and develop relationships with the community. The message that we want to convey is that CASA is a safe place that is culturally sensitive to the people's needs. Whilst as an agency we think we have much more development to achieve in this area, we are hopeful this will be a collaborative process with the community.

We also have three Aboriginal workers on our crisis care after hours response team. The recruitment process has been in place for two years and is proving to be helpful in connecting Aboriginal people who have experienced a recent sexual assault to the service for support. The additional benefit has been having a link to the community that will 'talk up' the issues around sexual assault.

Fiona Boyle  
Gippsland CASA

SECASA launched two plaques during the year acknowledging the Wurrundjeri People and the Boon Wurrung People and their Elders past, present and future. As the SECASA East Bentleigh office sits on border lands there were two language groups to acknowledge.

## **PRIMARY PREVENTION**

The Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPPSS) continues to be implemented in schools in Victoria and CASAs have continued to pursue preventative work by providing workshops in both primary and secondary schools.

In February 2010 DEECD commissioned CASA House as the 'lead agency' to develop and implement a Demonstration Project. The purpose of the project was to develop and implement a project that will inform a DEECD approach to gender-based violence prevention within school settings. CASA House has developed a model for secondary schools and delivered professional development and teacher training to four metropolitan Melbourne schools. Classroom trials have begun and evaluation commenced September 2010.

Pauline Gilbert  
Manager  
CASA House

A large number of school programs are being run across the State including

- Respect Protect Connect (RPC) being run by SECASA as a peer education program in secondary schools in the Southern Metropolitan Region. RPC provides anti violence workshops for young men and respectful relationship workshops for young women. Primary Schools receive a whole of school advanced personal safety program called Feeling Safe Together. The program was delivered to 6835 young people during the year. Originally a partnership with Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) regrettably withdrew from the program due to funding difficulties. SECASA has employed their female project worker to run the female student workshops and train peer educators.
- Wimmera CASA's a Personal Safety Success Training program, using Mallee Sexual Assault Centre's manual, for primary school children. This program consists of one session per week for five weeks. Approximately 1300 students participated.
- Northern CASA delivering the Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPPSS) in regional schools. West CASA delivered SAPPSS in the Western Region.

- ECASA ran SAPPSS in four secondary schools in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
- SWCASA is working in primary schools using an American program 'Three kinds of touching'.
- Mallee Sexual Assault Unit provides joint school education programs with Victoria Police in the Mallee region.

### **CASA FORUM WEBSITE**

The number of people accessing the CASA Forum website for 2010-2011 is 25 718. There were 39 597 visits with 114 569 pages downloaded. The average monthly usage is 2 143 people visiting 3 300 times and downloading 9 547 pages. Annually there were 12 462 PDF downloads which is 1 038 per month on average. This is a significant increase on 2009-2010.

Presentations were made at the CASA Forum Showcase in October 2010, the Feminist Futures Conference in May 2011 and the Australasian Women in Policing Conference in Hobart on engaging with cyberspace and the positives and challenges of social media.

The Website sub-committee has expanded its membership with representatives from SECASA, ECASA, Gippsland CASA, Barwon CASA and UMCASA. This committee meets once a quarter to discuss website issues and cyber safety.

### **MULTIDISCIPLINARY CENTRES FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT**

In the 2006-07 State Budget, the Victorian Government allocated \$34 million to a Sexual Assault Reform Package. This package built on the recommendations of the landmark 2004 Victorian Law Reform Commission report **Sexual Offences Law and Procedure**, and aimed to bring about reform across the criminal justice system.

As part of the Sexual Assault Reform Package, \$6 million was provided for the creation of two Multi Disciplinary Centres (MDC). One based at Frankston and one at Mildura. The aim of the MDCs is to facilitate responses to people who have experienced sexual assault to be able to get help in one location from a team of staff from different agencies.

These two MDCs have been in existence for almost five years and have proved to be extremely successful with close collaboration between Victoria Police, CASAs and the Department of Human Services. They have moved from being a pilot project to being funded recurrently. A new MDC is in the final stages in collaboration with Barwon CASA.

The evaluation of the MDC model was conducted by Deakin University. Feedback was that the MDC are seen as successful enabling victims to move between services in an effective and efficient manner. Funding has been received for the development of a statewide partnership document.

Work has commenced on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement that will be the basis for collaboration between CASAs, Victoria Police and the Department of Human Services throughout the State as the Centres are rolled out.

## **EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

2010-2011 saw the SuccessWorks Evaluation reports finalized and released. The Department of Justice released three evaluation reports undertaken by SuccessWorks on the

- Sexual Assault Reform Strategy 2011
- Forensic Nurse Network Initiative 2011
- Additional Voluntary Treatment Places for 15-17 year olds who engage in sexually abusive behaviour 2011

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- Family Violence Statewide Advisory Committee
- National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
- Coroner's Reference Group on Family Violence
- CEASE
- Specialist Assessment Working Group
- AASW Special Interest Group
- Child Safety Commissioner Sector Consultation Group
- Workforce Development Reference Group
- Statewide Advisory Committee to Prevent Sexual Assault
- Victorian Police University Research Advisory Committee – Policing Just Outcomes
- Victim Support Agency – Statewide Protocol CASA/VOC Reference Group
- Framework and Practice Guidelines for Strengthening Risk Management Across the Integrated Family Violence Services Reference Group
- Advisory committee on the Development of Victims Charter – Disability Strategy
- Disability Resource Reference Group
- A new legal frontier? ACSSA – Reference Group
- Violence Against Women Clinical Practice Guidelines Hospitals Working Group

- Vic Health Preventing Violence Against Women Advisory Committee
- Justice Family Violence Stakeholder Reference Group
- Just in Case Medicals Stakeholders Meeting
- Expert Advisory Committee for Gender Sensitivity and Safety Project (Mental Health)

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

CASAs provide Training and Community Education to numerous and varied audiences across the State. These audiences include:

- Universities
- Vic Police – Detective training  
- SOCIT training
- Department of Human Services Child Protection
- Education facilities
- Community groups
- Regional professional groups
- GP Divisions
- Health professionals

This year CASA Forum, The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) continue to provide training to the Sexual Assault field across Victoria via the **Sexual Assault Work Force Development Project (SSAWD)**.

Essential Foundation and Advanced workshops continue to be run and a 12 month training calendar is provided to all services.

The Community Education Package was completed and distributed across the sector. It will be revised in 2012-13.

The evaluation conducted by Dr Suellen Murray RMIT came to an end and was replaced by an annual needs analysis and ongoing evaluation of each workshop. These evaluations are used to inform the delivery of the workshop in the following year.

Topics covered in the workshops have included:

- The legal system
- creative therapies
- train the trainer
- traumatic attachment and brain development
- working with people with complex mental health issues
- working with CALD communities

- disability and sexual assault
- working with children
- working with mothers and daughters
- working with Aboriginal communities
- Working in cyber space

Negotiations are taking place with RMIT looking at making a Vocational Graduate Certificate in Community Services available for sector workers who attend a number of workshops and undertake some additional academic work. These negotiations should be finalized for 2012.

### **Pap Screen project**

**CASA Forum and Pap Screen Victoria have developed a joint initiative to support victim/survivors of sexual assault to access cervical screening.**

*Anecdotally CASAs are aware that victim/survivors of sexual assault either don't screen or under screen due to the difficulties many women experience when accessing intrusive medical procedures. A CASA House 2002 study of 15 women affirmed this.*

In partnership with CASAs, Pap Screen Victoria are:

- Developing a screening checklist to assist CASA counsellor/advocates in discussing screening with their clients
- Providing cervical screening information kits to each regional centre
- Providing education to CASA managers state wide through the CASA monthly forum and for seniors to enable the training to be passed on to counsellor/advocates
- Facilitating participation of Nurse Pap Test Providers in sexual assault workshops run by regional CASAs
- Identifying Nurse Pap Test Providers in CASA locations to provide support and referral
- Adding a page on PSV website about sexual assault with links to CASA website.

### **RESEARCH**

Collaborative research projects undertaken or being considered this year include:

- ACCSA:  
"Giving Voice to Victim/Survivors' Knowledge of Sexual Offending"

The impact of ethnic identity on the effects of childhood sexual abuse for women over 18 in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane: University of South Australia.

- ACCSA  
"A new legal frontier? The role of social networking services and mobile phone technology in facilitating sexual violence."
- CASA Mapping with Child Protection and Victoria Police re EFT and Outreach locations.
- Women's Centre for Health Matters ACT – best practice in partnerships and joint training between domestic violence, sexual assault and disabilities sectors with CASA Forum.
- The Use of Social Networking Sites to Facilitate Disclosure of Sexual Assault – SECASA. Australian Catholic University, Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre
- La Trobe University: Just outcomes: An examination of jury directions in Victoria.
- Melbourne University: Young adults, licensed venues and unwanted sexual attention.

## **THE MEDIA**

CASA Forum has had a very busy year liaising with and responding to requests from many media outlets throughout Victoria (and Australia).

Over 30 media outlets have contacted the CASA Forum this year including

- Channel 9
- Channel 10
- Channel 7
- MX
- The Herald Sun
- The Age
- ABC PM
- The Law Report
- Geelong Advertiser
- Geelong Independent
- ABC 774
- 3AW
- The Sunday Herald Sun
- The Sunday Age
- MMM/Fox

- Melbourne Talk Radio
- Youth Central
- The World Today
- Hobart Mercury
- 3CR
- Marie Claire
- Melbourne Magazine
- Madison Magazine
- Bendigo Advertiser
- AAP
- National Radio
- Star Newspapers

Topics included court outcomes and appeals, consent issues and Supreme Court appeals, drink spiking, false reports, Farah Jama case, the arts, government policy and legislation, recent abductions, general information, community attitudes to sexual assault, crime statistics, football codes, AFL players, AFL organisation and media outlet responses to sexual assault.

#### **DATA COLLECTION:**

All CASA are now recording their data on the DHS IRIS program. Data collected included client data, assault data, clinical work practices data and service provision. This has enabled DHS to pull together Annual Sexual Assault Services data for Victoria. A number of CASA managers attend the IRIS Users working group with DHS in order to participate in discussions about up grades, etc.

