



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

# Annual Report

2011-2012

Convenor Kerry Burns

Upper Murray CASA

Co Convenor Shireen Gunn

Ballarat CASA

Treasurer Jo Sheehan

Mallee Sexual Assault Unit

Media Carolyn Worth

South Eastern CASA

## Members

Bonnie Travers – Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Helen Bolton- Barwon CASA

Pauline Gilbert- CASA House

Karen Hogan - Gatehouse

Judy Flanagan- Eastern CASA

Fiona Boyle- Gippsland CASA

Judy McHugh- Goulburn Valley CASA

Eileen Oates- Loddon Campaspe CASA

Charmaine Farrell- Northern CASA

Helen Wilson- South Western CASA

Jane Vanderstoel- WestCASA

Jo-Anne Bates- Wimmera CASA

*We acknowledge the first owners of this land and pay our deep respect to elders past and present as we conduct our work in the State of Victoria.*

## **Introduction**

The Victorian CASA Forum is the peak body of the 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours). Together we work to ensure that women, children and men who are victim/survivors of sexual assault have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs. We also work towards the elimination of sexual violence through community and professional education, informing government policy, advocating for law reform and facilitating research to increase community understanding of the nature and incidence of sexual assault. This work is our common foundation.

There is diversity among our services, demonstrating independence in service delivery model developments and responsiveness to the unique geographic and community needs based work that is undertaken throughout the State. Therefore, some CASA's now (and historically) respond to women and children seeking support when affected by family violence. Furthermore, some CASA's are providing services for children under 10 with problem sexualised behaviours and young people 10-14 with sexually abusive behaviours. A small number of CASA's work with young people with sexually abusive behaviours through to 18 years of age.

In 2012/ 2013 CASA Forum members have chosen to concentrate their cooperative efforts on a range of endeavours which will be described in this report. For anyone interested in more details about any of the range of projects described in this report, please contact the Convenor who will assist you with your enquiry.

## **Relationship with Department of Human Services**

Every second month we welcome representatives from the Department of Human Services to consult about legislative and policy domains and their relationship to our practice. Through use of the specialist knowledge held in our field we may be clarifying, lobbying, initiating or informing State government with reference to various developments. This year we were sad to say goodbye to Liz Olle who has been hard working and supportive. We remain well connected through Madeleine Oakes, Jan Thompson and Jenny Willox and thank them for their ongoing support.

## **Joint CASA/Pap Screen Victoria initiative**

The joint CASA/Pap Screen Victoria initiative has been ably led by Judy Flanagan of Eastern CASA. Judy initiated this work in response to the worrying statistics and information about the sexual health of women who are victim survivors of sexual assault.

Over a third of women in Victoria do not have regular 2 yearly Pap tests. Research shows that some women who have encountered sexual assault are reminded of the experience by gynaecological procedures such as the Pap test, and are therefore more likely to avoid participating in regular cervical screening. To help support victim/survivors of sexual assault

in accessing cervical screening in a safe and comfortable environment, CASA Forum and Pap Screen Victoria (PSV) have established a partnership.

In July 2011 Pap Screen Victoria surveyed 170 nurse cervical screening providers in Victoria, assessing their experience of working with victim/survivors of sexual assault, the procedures they used to support those clients, and any training they may have undertaken in the area. The results from this survey have formed the basis of the CASA/Pap Screen partnership's strategic direction.

**Outcomes achieved to date:**

- Strong relationship built between PSV and CASA
- 18 workshops delivered by CASAs across Victoria educating a total of 195 nurse cervical screening providers about sexual assault issues and working with clients who are victim/survivors of sexual assault
- 4 hour workshop delivered by PSV to equip CASA managers and senior staff with information about cervical screening, HPV and cervical cancer.
- Information pages dedicated to victim/survivors of sexual assault added to PSV and CASA websites
- New educational resources for CASA counsellor/advocates and nurse cervical screening providers
- Cervical screening education packages for CASA staff across all 15 centres in Victoria
- Identifying nurse cervical screening providers in CASA locations to provide support and referral
- A poster presentation of the project at the first National Sexual and Reproductive Health Conference 20-21 November in Melbourne

Partners in the Pap Screen Project from left are: Sandy Anderson, Nurse Cervical Screening Provider, Judy Flanagan, Eastern CASA and Harriet Wynne, Project Worker, Pap Screen Victoria



All CASA Forum members are pleased with the tools available to support women as they gain information about improving their sexual health with access to pap tests.



## **Specialist Assessment Working Group (Children)**

Karen Hogan, Helen Wilson and Mary Jadresko formed a working group to support the further investigation and understanding of the practice of specialist assessment in Victorian CASA's and to develop recommendations for future practice. The working group were supported by the endeavours of Sophie Burford, Bachelor of Social Work student on placement at SECASA, supervised by Mary. Sophie informed us through her report titled "Specialist Assessment Practice in Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault" that there are several models operating internationally and this is reflected in CASA practice. It was recommended that a uniform specialist assessment model be implemented across the CASA's which is informed by the development of CASA Specialist Assessment Practice Guidelines.

## **Making Rights Reality**

The Victorian Law Reform Commission concluded in 2004 that "It is clear that the criminal justice system offers people with a cognitive impairment very limited protection against sexual assault...However, with adequate assistance many people with a cognitive impairment can tell the police what has happened to them and can give evidence in court." This was the start of the Making Rights Reality (MRR) project. A number of agencies cooperated including the CASA Forum to access funding to run a pilot project aimed at providing a better experience of reporting sexual assault for people with a cognitive impairment or communication difficulty.

Eventually the Federation of Community Legal Services took the lead with the project. After six years the project reached its target of \$400 000. In February 2012 MRR commenced as a partnership between the Federation, CASA Forum and Springvale Monash Community Legal Services. SECASA is the CASA providing a direct service to victims of sexual assault with a cognitive impairment or communication difficulty.

The project provides a specialist, comprehensive service. All SECASA workers, and a number of workers in other CASAs, have undertaken Independent Third Party training. In addition, training has been provided on working with communication aids. To date the project has doubled the number of clients seen at SECASA with a cognitive impairment or communication difficulty.

It is anticipated that this project will be rolled out across the state in the future.

## **Workforce Development**

2011 marks the fifth year of the Workforce Development Program. In December 2009 the program moved to SECASA as the lead agency and Sarah McGregor as the Workforce Development Training Coordinator. CASA Forum, with SECASA as the lead agency, RMIT University and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault work in partnership to implement, manage and monitor the Sexual Assault Workforce Development program. A Reference Group meets quarterly to oversee the operation of the program.

The major responsibility of the Workforce Development Program for 2011 – 12 was:

- To provide a total of eleven workshops (22 days) and four days flexible training which allows for training to be organised around visiting overseas or interstate experts

Workshops were conducted on a range of topics including

- Keeping Mother's in the Loop
- Trauma and the Body
- Working with Children with Problem Sexual Behaviour
- Engaging in Cyber Space
- Working with Adolescents
- Legal Training
- Working with People with Disabilities
- Working with People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
- Art and Creative Therapies

The four flexible days were used for the provision of training for the Sexually Abusive Treatment Services workers.

## **Casa Forum Website**

During the 2011/12 financial year the CASA Forum website was given a new graphic design and has also been moved into a new Content Management System (SilverStripe). Work has also begun on providing individual CASA's with a means of adding their own information (positions vacant, news etc) to the website.

### Website Statistics

45,625 people visited the CASA Forum website during the 2011/12 financial year. Over half of these people accessed the site from within Australia. They viewed 128,188 web pages.

In addition, there were 8,713 PDF information sheets downloaded during the year with multilingual brochures being popular. This is an average of 726 downloads per month.

## **National Association of Services Against Sexual Assault (NASASV)**

NASASV is the peak body for organisations who work with victim/survivors of sexual violence and who work to prevent sexual violence.

Eileen Oates and Jane Vanderstoel represent Victoria on the Board of NASASV. Eileen is secretary to the Board.

Eileen also represents NASASV on Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) along with Dorinda Cox from WA, Liz Little from Tasmania and Samantha Bowden from NT.

Activities NASASV has undertaken in the past 12 months include:

- A review of the National Standards of Practice that offer both guidance and aspiration to deliver services as best practice. The review process continues with Australia- wide consultations on the draft.
- Involvement at various levels with the implementation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.
- Representation on AWAVA and Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)
- Attendance at visit by Special Envoy from the United Nations Rasheeda Mandy from South Africa. The visit had a focus on violence against women and on Indigenous communities.
- Support in endorsing AWAVA and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Association (NATSIWA)'s *Australian NGOs' Follow-up Report to the CEDAW Committee's 2010 Interim Recommendations*. All six National Women's Alliances endorsed the report alongside 105 NGOs/Alliances/Networks. The report can be accessed from AWAVA's website: <http://awava.org.au/resources-2/convention-on-the-elimination-of-discrimination-against-women-cedaw/ngos-follow-up-report-to-cedaw/>.

## History Project

While forging the way ahead is our most common practice, we are aware of the importance of history and our formative years. This year we have engaged Lesley Hewitt to consult with Staff, Managers and Board Members and to examine documentation held by CASAs in Victoria and to produce a history of CASAs in Victoria. This is a two year project and we look forward to its conclusion in 2013 - 2014.

## The EVAs 2012

The development of The EVAs Media Awards is a project partnership between Domestic Violence Victoria, No To Violence Male Family Violence Prevention Association and CASA Forum.

The EVAs are made possible through current project funding provided by the Victorian State Government; the initial project funding came through VicHealth under the *Respect, Responsibility and Equality: Preventing Violence Against Women* initiative.

The EVAs project advisory committee includes representation from:

- Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic)
- No To Violence Male Family Prevention Association (NTV)
- CASA Forum
- Department of Human Services
- Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRCV)
- The Office of Public Advocate
- South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault.
- Vic Health
- Victoria Police
- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (WDVCS)

The EVAs Media Awards honour journalists for excellence in the reporting of violence against women, in print, television, radio and online media; and celebrate media contributions to the prevention of violence against women. Entries are judged on journalistic merit with emphasis on the promotion of community awareness and understanding of violence against women, and inspiring community interest and action.

### **GOLD EVA 2102 – Best media across all categories**

Clem Bestow

*Brian McFadden – "Just the Way You Are"*

Impress Magazine

This was a controversial music review that reaches in and rips the heart out of the social myths and behaviours that tolerate, excuse, minimise and romanticise violence against women. Clem's piece pushes so many boundaries on this issue, saying something incredibly important in a popular culture median which is too often viewed as safe from criticism. She surprises the reader with a total lack of acceptance

for gender subtext that “boys will be boys”. She tackles multiple facets within the issue of sexual assault, in particular the disregard for consent, the attitude that rape is trivial or funny, and that men ‘don’t really mean it’. Clem contextualises her arguments by quoting current statistics, informing the public on the extent of the real problem.

She crushes the tacit belief that these kinds of recordings are somehow OK, and brings into question all those involved in the production of music. ([www.evas.org.au](http://www.evas.org.au))

Other awards across **PRINT, ONLINE, RADIO, and TELEVISION**, can be viewed on the EVA’s website.

## **Governance**

Over the past three years CASA Forum members have given deep consideration to the formal arrangements of the peak body. External consultation with facilitators with governance expertise and those with legal expertise has been undertaken. This year the incorporated body has been wound up and a memorandum of understanding to guide members is in draft.

The Memorandum of Understanding is introduced by CASA Forum’s vision, mission and philosophy –

*CASA Forum Represents Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault*

### **VISION**

A world free of sexual assault

### **MISSION**

CASA Forum brings together the collective expertise of Victoria CASAs to lead and inform policy, practice and research.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

*The Victorian CASA 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:*

- 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.



From Left- Managers of Victorian CASA's

Pauline Gilbert, CASA House; Carolyn Worth, South Eastern CASA; Helen Wilson, South Western CASA; Fiona Boyle, Gippsland CASA; Karen Hogan, Gatehouse; Shireen Gunn, Ballarat CASA; Kerry Burns, Upper Murray CASA,; Helen Bolton, Barwon CASA; Bonnie Travers, SACL; Eileen Oates, Loddon Campaspe CASA; Joanne Sheehan, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit; Judy Flanagan, Eastern CASA.

Absent: Jane Vanderstoel, WestCASA and Jo Anne Bates Wimmera CASA **Service Delivery**

## **Statistics 2011 2012**

The following tables show the number of cases that received a service in the reporting period.

### **Sexual assault support services**

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Adult 18+	6,117	1,094	7,211
Child 0-17	2,709	888	3,597
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,826</b>	<b>1,982</b>	<b>10,808</b>

### **Sexually abusive behaviour treatment services**

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<15 years at referral	115	507	622
15-17 years at referral	5	35	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>662</b>

### **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

613 Crisis Care presentations were coordinated from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Of those, 568 victim survivors were women, 34 were men and 11 were unknown (early new data entry issue). We handled a total of 8062 calls of which 4082 were placed to the Police/Emergency line and 3980 calls placed to the counselling line.

## **Response to Enquiries and Plans**

Members undertake to respond to enquiries conducted by the State Government of Victoria. This year papers have been submitted to –

- Parliamentary Inquiry Into Sexting
- Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry
- Sentence Indication and Specified Sentence Discounts - Sentencing Advisory Council
- Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations
- Failure to Protect – draft legislation
- Taxi Inquiry
- State Prevention of Violence against Women Action Plan
- Practical Lessons, Fair Consequences – Improving Diversion for Young People in Victoria.

## **Conferences**

Carolyn Worth and Juliet Summers, SECASA presented at Women's Policing conference in Hobart. The 7<sup>th</sup> Australasian Women and Policing Conference. Police and Community: Making It Happen | E-Hate U Workshop

## **Research**

[Synergistiq](#) is in the process of evaluation of the Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Services. To this date activities have included surveys of Counsellor/Advocates, 2 rounds of interviews with Managers and interviews with children, young people and parents and carers are underway. Ethics approval has been gained from Department of Human Services, Monash Medical and Gatehouse Centres. We look forward to a research report in the future.

## **Standards of Practice in Victoria**

Excellence in practice standards and the provision of quality of services for victim/survivors of sexual assault and for children/young people with problem sexualised behaviour/sexually abusive behaviour is one of the priorities of CASA Forum. To this end 2012/2013 has been a year of review.

- Cease Standards of Practice 2012
- CASA Forum Standards of Practice – 2008 are under review

Furthermore CASA Forum wrote to the Chief Commissioner in February 2012 asking for a review of the Code of Practice – Vic Police 2005. Since then a working group has been formed to undertake the work.

## **Celebrating Carolyn Worth's induction to the Victorian Women's Honour Roll**

Congratulations to Carolyn for being recognised in the Victorian Women's Honour Roll. It is a significant achievement and well deserved recognition of her contribution to women's rights.

## **Reform Progress - Multi Disciplinary Centres and Just in Case**

### **Medical Examinations**

The previous Labour government provided a 5 year timeline for the roll out of MDCs across the State after initial trials in pilot sites at Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and at Frankston in partnership with SECASA. With the Liberal State Government the Ministerial announcement provided a change of pace with three new MDC sites in train 2012/2013. Barwon CASA, Gippsland CASA and Loddon Campaspe CASA are in preparation for MDCs with Barwon leading the way. SECASA is also expecting an additional MDC with a 'Principal centre' site planned for Dandenong.

MSAU and SECASA have been confirmed as the two sites for the implementation stage of the JIC medical examinations. The delivery of JIC medical examinations was to commence in January/February 2012 but has been stalled. The slow start to this work has been disappointing.

### **Protocols**

Members have contributed to development of protocols with colleagues including

- Victim Support Agency – Victims Assistance Counselling Program Protocol
- Special Residential Services Protocol
- Office of the Public Advocate/ CASA protocol

### **Further Work**

Finally, and in summary a list of the various activities CASA Forum has engaged in is provided. CASA Forum works across a breadth of activities to ensure that the needs of victim/ survivors are met, no matter what location they are in and who is providing a response to their needs. Members play important roles in advocacy to ensure that policy, protocol and practice outcomes are meeting standards that provide quality service and caring environments for victim survivors of sexual assault and for children/young people with problem /sexually abusive behaviours. We have participated in –

- Policing Just Outcomes reference group
- CASA History Project Work
- One DHS accreditation standards
- Planning CASA Forum Conference 2012
- National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence

- Family Violence State-wide Advisory Committee
- CEASE
- AASW Sexual Assault Special Interest Group
- Workforce Development Reference Group
- Department of Justice Family Violence Stakeholder Reference Group
- A new Legal Frontier? The role of social networking services and mobile phone technology in facilitation of sexual violence – ACCSA reference group
- CASA Forum website Working Group

## **Conclusion**

The CASA Forum provides the 15 Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault, whether community based or auspiced by a health network, with a peak body which can facilitate service development, influence and develop policy and procedures related to practice and contribute to the development of national and state wide policy in relation to sexual assault services. To achieve this, members provide representation on state-wide and national committees to contribute to robust examination of decisions leading to policy and legislation. Collaboratively, members participate on particular working parties constructed to achieve agreed goals within the sector. We aim to influence the development of best practice in our field and to be influenced by those around us who can offer knowledge and skill to our sector. With a great sense of achievement, we present our year's work and forecast that we will continue to focus on the needs of victim survivors in 2012- 2013.

