



CASA Forum
Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault

Annual Report 2016–2017

We acknowledge the first owners of this land and pay our respects to Elders as we conduct our work in the State of Victoria.

Members

Convenor: Carolyn Gillespie, CASA House

Co-convenor: Fiona Boyle, Gippsland CASA

Treasurer: Joanne Sheehan Patterson, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit

Media: Carolyn Worth, South Eastern CASA

Julie Blacker, Eastern CASA

Helen Bolton, Barwon CASA

Kerry Burns, Centre Against Violence

Mary Clapham, South Western CASA

Charmaine Farrell, Northern CASA

Shireen Gunn, Ballarat CASA

Karen Hogan, Gatehouse Centre

Diane Rokvic, Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Jane Vanderstoel, WestCASA

Kate Wright, Loddon Campaspe CASA

Contact: Fiona Boyle, Gippsland CASA, 31-41 Buckley Street Morwell 3840; Telephone 0351 34 3922;

Email Fiona@gippscasa.org

<http://www.casa.org.au/>



CASA Forum acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



CASA Forum's Vision, Mission and Philosophy

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 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 people is multifaceted and complex. It includes emotional, 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 the positions of men, women and children in society and the power differences between them. These include differences 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 towards the empowerment of service users, through a victim's rights model, informed by the Victims' Rights Charter and the Human Rights Charter. The focus of service provision is the needs of victims/ survivors of recent and past sexual assault.



Introduction

The Victorian CASA Forum is the peak body of 14 Victorian CASAs and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line which, together, ensure a 24-hour service is available across the state. Working collaboratively, we ensure that women children and men who experience sexual assault have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs and to mitigate the effects of the trauma they have experienced. We also undertake a broad range of primary prevention activities and programs, to address the underlying drivers of sexual assault and family violence. This work includes:

- community education, including a range of Respectful Relationship programs in schools and at tertiary institutions
- professional education sessions to health, welfare and education professional
- informing government policy
- advocating for law reform
- providing submissions and data to government Inquiries such as the Federal Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission
- facilitating research to increase community understanding of the nature and incidence of sexual assault

Over the past three to five years, there has been a huge increase in demand for CASA services, including a rise in the number of:

- requests for support services for the impact of sexual assault, including counselling and advocacy
- people disclosing and seeking support for past sexual assault, some disclosing for the first time
- people seeking support for a recent assault.

This has resulted in all CASAs having to deal with longer client waiting lists and in clients facing longer waiting times for counselling services. All clients who seek support for a recent assault are offered support immediately, 24 hours a day.

Additional funding has been provided by the Victorian Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) to individual CASAs, resulting in an increase in service delivery across Victoria in 2016–17.

There has been a significant increase in the numbers of people calling the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL) for support – an increase of over 3000 calls from 2015–16 to 2016–17.

Notably, and very regrettably, SACL has not received any increase in funding, in spite of this unprecedented increase in callers seeking support.

All Victorian CASAs maintain accreditation against the Human Services Standards. These Standards (gazetted as the DHHS Standards) have been developed by the Victorian Government DHHS, and focus on ensuring compliance in four key areas: Empowerment, Access & Engagement, Wellbeing and Participation.



Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line

SACL provides an after-hours service, throughout the state of Victoria, coordinating crisis care responses for people who have experienced a sexual assault within the past two weeks. SACL coordinates the work of police, other emergency services, hospitals and regional CASAs in responding to recent sexual assaults.

In 2016–17, SACL coordinated 600 after-hours crisis care responses for people who had experienced a recent sexual assault, and received 16,928 calls across the crisis counselling and police/emergency lines. These figures represent an increase from 2015–16, when 557 crisis care responses were coordinated outside business hours and 13,871 calls were received.

Of the 600 crisis care responses:

- 95% were for adult females.
- 17% were for female children.
- 5% were for males, and, of these, five were for male children.
- a total of 106 children were seen in CASA Crisis Care Units after hours in 2016–17.
- 72% of people were sexually assaulted by someone known to them in some way (family member, friend/acquaintance/ex or current partner).
- 78% were aged between 19 and 50.
- 48% were aged between 19 and 30.

Multidisciplinary Centres

Multidisciplinary Centres (MDCs) are regional centres in which key services involved in responding to instances of sexual assault are co-located. The services include:

- Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs)
- DHHS Sexual Assault Investigation Teams
- CASA Counsellor/Advocates
- at some MDCs
 - Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine
 - Department of Health nurses
 - Victoria Police Family Violence Unit
 - other family violence support agencies.

There are currently six MDCs in Victoria, located at:

- Seaford PenSAC (SECASA)
- Dandenong MDC (SECASA)
- Bendigo (LCCASA)
- Geelong (Barwon CASA/ Minerva)
- Mildura (Mallee SAU)
- Morwell (Gippsland CASA).



An MDC is currently under construction at Wyndham, in Melbourne's west. West CASA services will be available at Wyndham MDC.

Making Rights Reality

SECASA's Making Rights Reality program was acknowledged at the 2016 Australian Centre for Leadership for Women Diversity Awards, coming third place in the 'Empowering Women With A Disability' category.

Through Making Rights Reality, SECASA also provides secondary consultation to the disability sector and counsellor/advocates across Victoria. The program has been successfully running now for six years and focuses on:

- ensuring access to counselling, the criminal justice system and the Victim of Crime Assistance Tribunal, for clients who have a disability
- supporting SECASA's collaboration with self-advocacy organisations and disability services to increase referrals and share knowledge
- training and resourcing CASA counsellor/advocates.

Therapeutic and Support Groups

Across the state, many groups were run for people dealing with the impacts of sexual assault. The following lists provide a snapshot of groups run by CASAs in 2016–17.

SECASA

With 50 plus staff, and covering almost one third of the state, SECASA is the largest Victorian CASA. In 2016–17, SECASA ran a broad range of therapeutic and support groups, including body based and creative arts groups.

- Heart Strong
- Creative Voice with facilitator Hilda Knottenbelt
- Trauma Informed Yoga with practitioner Karen Spitz
- Art group – mosaics for mourning wall at Moorabbin Hospital with Anne Riggs
- Support Group for men
- Cyber safety group for young people and their parents/carers
- Art group – creating hand-made books and linocut prints with Anne Riggs
- Female Survivors of Sexual Assault
- Finding a Marketable You job skills with facilitators Beth Evans and Gillian Baldwin
- Reflexology
- Survivors Group
- Cyber Social Media for 12–16 year olds
- Photography and client cookbook
- Children's safety skills
- Cyber safety group for young people and their parents/carers
- Men's group



- Dangerous Dames Urban Awareness and Self Protection Essentials Group with Instructor Adam Stayfer
- Support Group for women who have a relationship with a sexual violence offender
- Reclaiming your sexuality after childhood sexual assault
- Cyber safety group for AWARE staff
- Protective Behaviours for Children, with concurrent parent/carer group
- Sexuality Workshop
- Building Blocks for Sexual Assault Counselling – for workers in other agencies.

BARWON CASA

- The educative Blossom Program for women is run over several weeks and follows themes related to family violence and empowerment.
- The Connect Program is for mothers and primary school aged children whose relationship has been affected by family violence.
- The Trauma Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (TACT) Program supports women over 12 weeks to manage the many effects of trauma and build greater self-awareness and skill development.

Gender Diversity

CASA Forum has led a focus on improving access and services for people of different genders, including people who identify as non-binary or who wish not to be identified as male or female. Starlady, Youth Project Officer with Zoe Belle Gender Collective (ZBGC), visited CASA Forum in 2017 and outlined the work of ZBGC, raising some of the key issues for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse individuals and communities in terms of increased vulnerability to sexual assault and seeking support for the impact of sexual assault. As a result, Starlady has provided training to staff at several regional CASAs. ZBGC is a program auspiced by CoHealth.

Strengthening Hospitals Responses to Family Violence (SHRFV)

CASA Forum has continued to support and contribute to this important work across Victorian hospitals. During the year, a specialist sexual assault module was developed to add to the SHRFV Toolkit, to be used by hospitals to support staff to identify and respond appropriately to suspected or disclosed incidents of family violence and sexual assault of patients, staff or carers. CASA Forum was contracted to develop the sexual assault module in 2016 and Northern CASA Counsellor Advocate Sophie Rak was seconded to CASA Forum to complete this work. Sophie worked closely with the team from The Women's and with other workers on developing specialist modules relating to indications of violence perpetrated against children and older people. Goulburn Valley Centre Against Sexual Assault (GVCASA) is the lead agency for the rollout of SHRFV for hospitals in the Goulburn Valley and north-east Victoria, NCASA is actively involved in the project at Austin Health and SECASA is leading the work at Monash Health.



SARA – report anonymously

SARA (Sexual Assault Report Anonymously) is a mobile friendly website, used by people who have experienced a sexual assault, and others, to anonymously report sexual assault incidents to SECASA. SARA offers a less confronting reporting option to disclose and help make our community safer. This year, 238 reports were received through SARA. Data is passed to police contacts in each state and territory and a counsellor is assigned to follow up with reporters. SECASA has anonymised the SARA data so that researchers from RMIT can carry out a detailed analysis of the information. This research report is expected in 2018.

<http://www.sara.org.au>

Tertiary Institutions

In 2016—17, across the state, CASAs have worked extensively with tertiary institutions in response to the growing concern about the rates of sexual assault of university students, both on campus and elsewhere. Supporting initiatives driven by students themselves, as well as individual universities and colleges, CASAs have provided direct counselling and advocacy services to hundreds of students, and participated in a range of actions, including:

- delivering key note speeches and participating on Discussion Panels following on-campus screenings of *The Hunting Ground*
- delivering training sessions to staff on responding to disclosures of sexual assault, including residential student leaders and Student Services welfare and security teams
- providing specialist training and secondary consultation to staff of university counselling services, focused on working with people impacted by sexual assault trauma
- contributing to the development of policies and procedures focused on preventing violence against women/gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and sexual assault.

A number of CASAs have established weekly outposts to their local university or tertiary institution, offering on-campus counselling to students and staff affected by sexual assault. These include CASA House to RMIT University, SECASA to Monash University in Clayton & Caulfield, NCASA to La Trobe University in Bundoora and Loddon Campaspe CASA to La Trobe University in Bendigo.

Sexual Assault, the Law, Your Rights

A revised version of *Sexual Assault, the Law, Your Rights* was published this year. This revised version covers changes in legislation and meets audience needs identified in two focus groups, via plain English explanations and an easier-to-use size and format with colour-coded sections.

Funding for the focus groups was provided by the Victoria Law Foundation and the revised text was written by SECASA staff member Mary Lancaster with design by SECASA's Miles Summers. SECASA funded the printing of 5000 copies. This is a much-valued resource which is used extensively by staff and clients of CASAs. Thank you SECASA!



Restoring Hope Book Launch

ECASA hosted a book launch for *The Hero's Journey: Healing from Sexual Abuse*. The book documents the stories of a number of survivors, most of whom attended the launch. It shares stories of recovery, healing, courage and generosity – of journeys back from abuse and how different people approached it. The stories are both inspiring and humbling. The book was produced by Restoring Hope, the organisation developed by Kim Elzebaik, aimed at supporting children and young people affected by sexual abuse. A number of CASA clients and staff attended the launch at which lawyer and long-time sexual assault advocate Viv Waller was the guest speaker.

Sexual Assault Workforce Development 2016–17

The state-wide Sexual Assault Workforce Development (SAWD) program is a Victorian Government-funded program to improve the quality and consistency of responses to victim/survivors of sexual assault. The program aims to develop sexual assault workers' competence and confidence and improve service quality and consistency. SAWD is developing and delivering training to new and existing sexual assault workers on a range of topics.

2017 marks the eleventh year of SAWD. CASA Forum, with SECASA as the lead agency, continues to work in partnership to implement, manage and monitor SAWD. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) continues to assist the program by providing information on current research and developments across the field of sexual assault.

Members of the reference group throughout the 2016–17 financial year have included Cyra Fernandes (Australian Childhood Foundation); Dr Antonia Quadara (AIFS); Carolyn Worth (Manager, SECASA), Jane Vanderstoel (Manager, West CASA); Joanne Sheehan (Manager, Mallee SAU); Marita Nyhuis (DHHS); Karen Hogan (Manager, Gatehouse Centre); Sarah McGregor (Workforce Development Training Co-ordinator, SECASA).

The Program Management Group and the Program Reference Group meet on a regular basis and continue to support and resource the Workforce Development Coordinator.

There are two major responsibilities of SAWD for 2016–17:

- To provide a total of eleven workshops (22 days). This allows for some training to be organised around visiting overseas or interstate experts.
- To distribute and maintain the Community Education Package.

The program incorporates the Sexually Abusive Treatment Services (SABTS) Workforce Development program by including the workshops and Advanced Practitioner Group dates and topics on the SAWD calendar. These workshops and practice groups are arranged by Carolyn Worth and Russell Pratt for CEASE and ANZATSA.

Several of the workshops planned for 2016–17 were repeats of successful workshops well attended and evaluated in previous years. Many of these workshops are considered core training by workers across the field. Core workshops presented during this period have included: Supporting



Victim/survivors through the Justice System; Facilitation & Presentation: Skills for Delivering Community Education about Sexual Assault; and Growing Up in Play Therapy.

We have continued to include one-day workshops in the training calendar. One-day workshops aim to accommodate the needs of smaller agencies and part-time workers who find it difficult to commit to two consecutive days of training.

Essential Foundations workshops are designed to meet the needs of workers new to the sexual assault sector. In the past year, a total of seven Essential Foundation workshops have been presented, including:

- Mindfulness (Dr Craig Hassad) (20 attended)
- Supporting Victim/survivors through the Justice System (26 attended)
- Trauma Focused Therapy, working with children and adolescents who have been sexually assaulted (Dr Rowena Conroy Phoenix Australia) (24 attended)
- Working with Men Who Have Been Sexually Abused (Dr Gary Foster Living Well Queensland) (20 attended)
- Schools Cyber Safety Education (Annie Jennings, Ballarat CASA; Juliet Summers, SECASA; Mark Tregonning & Anna Leith, Civil Justice, Access & Equity, Victoria Legal Aid; Simon Fogarty, Victoria Police) (12 attended)

Victoria Police

CASA Forum maintains a strong working relationship with Victoria Police, in particular the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigations (SOCIT and SOCAT) and Family Violence Units. VicPol visitors to CASA Forum in 2016-17 included Senior Sergeant Brett Meadows from SOCIT and Det Senior Sergeant Andrew Kerr and Inspector Steve Wilson from Sex Crimes. At the local level, all CASAs collaborate closely with their regional SOCIT and Family Violence teams. As part of the Victoria Police SOCIT course, which trains police officers in sexual offences work, CASA Forum regularly delivers sessions in understanding and responding to disclosures or reports of sexual abuse.

Research

Gippsland CASA Research and Evaluation report 2017 from Christina Melrose, GCASA Research Worker

In a demonstration of our commitment to excellence and innovation in service delivery, Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault became the first CASA to create a dedicated Research and Evaluation role. I stepped into that role in December 2016, and it's been a fantastic year so far. I have had the privilege of working with staff from across all areas of the business, with a shared vision to synthesise current scholarly and practice-based knowledge with staff, community and stakeholder inputs to deliver effective, trauma-informed services that are congruent with our organisational values of dignity, empowerment and respect.



Perhaps the 'jewel in the crown' for our research activities this year is a community attitudes research project, conceptualised with the support of Dr Keith Sutton from Monash University's Department of Rural Health. The study, designed and piloted within GCASA, titled 'Community Attitudes towards Sexual Assault and Sexual Assault Support Services', aims to explore how strongly common misconceptions about sexual assault/abuse resonate with Australian adults, and how adults would seek help if they were sexually assaulted. The study also aims to reveal how prevalent self-reported, personally experienced incidents of sexual violence are among Australian residents, and tap into unconscious biases around various aspects of sexual assault, with the use of fictional – but realistic – vignettes.

In line with the strategic plan to engage more adult males who have experienced sexual assault, the second phase of this research will conduct a series of in-depth personal interviews with men, examining what some of the common misconceptions around men's experience of sexual violence are, and what some of the barriers are for engaging with support services and the police. Findings so far reinforce some of the work we are already doing, and provide some really practical and easily incorporated ideas for development.

Other research developments have included cultivating networks with Monash, Swinburne and Federation University researchers, along with clinicians from other CASAs with a strong interest in research. GCASA is helping to steer the development of a Gippsland Centre for Innovation, Research, and Practice within the children, youth and families sector in partnership with representatives from Federation and Monash universities, and the Department of Education. The Centre will showcase exciting research and clinical developments within the field, through regular webinars, workshops and symposiums throughout the year.

Staff have recently undergone training in the Most Significant Change method of story collection, with the collection of stories relating to those participating in the SABTS program to commence shortly, as part of a larger evaluation of the program.

GCASA research has supported various policy and grant submissions, and has garnered the interest of local media, including WIN News, ABC Gippsland, Gippsland FM and the Latrobe Valley Express. This suggests that the work we are doing as an organisation is valued within our community, and beyond.

Following recommendations from Deloitte Access Economics, and in consultation with members of the leadership team and various staff members, an *Implementation and Evaluation Plan* has been drafted. This has led to a greater focus on evaluation of staff activities and training to improve resources and development opportunities. In line with the draft plan, data collection will soon commence around client quality of life throughout their episodes of care with our service. This, in conjunction with other evaluation methods, will comprehensively examine how all areas of our organisation are working towards our Mission, Vision, and Values; highlighting areas for celebration, and learning!

Perhaps what has been most exciting is how readily staff across our organisation have embraced this new role. I have been both humbled and heartened by regular staff requests for input on various



projects, and I have supported staff learning and development in their areas of interest. This has also been reflected at the board level, who have graciously agreed to extend this position for another year. Thank you all for being so generous and supportive!

With some promising foundations laid this year, here's to an exciting, innovative 2017–18 in the GCASA Research and Evaluation space.

Gatehouse Centre Research Report

Title of Project: EXAMINING THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA IN ADULTS WHO WERE RAISED IN AUSTRALIAN ORPHANAGES/CHILDRENS HOMES

A Gatehouse Centre Senior Psychologist is working on a PhD which is examining the intergenerational transmission of trauma in adults who were raised in Australian orphanages/children's homes.

I am interested in understanding how growing up in institutional 'care' affected survivors' parenting and their relationships with their children and to this end, my aim was to interview the survivors of institutional 'care' and one of their adult children so I can better understand how a parent's history of life in institutional 'care' may have been transmitted to their relationship with their child and how the child understood their parent's experience. I would like to thank the various CASAs who supported my recruitment process for my PhD in 2017.

Almost all participants engaged with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and those who did reported it to be a very good experience. Once again, telling, being heard and believed, witnessed and treated with respect is healing. I am left with profound respect for the stories of survival in the face of intense human suffering at the hands of those who were supposed to care for the most vulnerable children in society.

In addition to this PhD work, one Gatehouse Centre Clinician is completing a Masters of Child Psychotherapy and another Gatehouse Clinician is completing a Masters of Family Therapy.

Gatehouse and the CFTSI Project

The Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI), developed at the Yale University Child Trauma Centre (CTC), is a treatment model that was specifically developed for implementation with children and young people during the peri-traumatic period, which covers the initial days and weeks following a traumatic event before traumatic stress can become established and PTSD can be diagnosed. As a part of an RCH scholarship, Gatehouse Centre Senior clinician met with Yale researchers, along with clinicians currently implementing the CFTSI in the USA, to learn more about the model and its potential benefits for children and young people here in Australia. Then in July, travelled back to Yale, along with two other Gatehouse Centre Colleagues, to undertake the initial training in CFTSI. The three of us now participate in on-going supervision with Yale and are working with them to establish a good evidence base for the possible expansion of the models use across the sector.



REPORTS FROM INDIVIDUAL CASAs

Ballarat Centre Against Sexual Assault (Ballarat CASA)

The spotlight from the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continues to fuel a high demand on Ballarat CASA. Since it commenced in 2013, the demand and corresponding referrals in Ballarat have risen 60 percent! Ballarat CASA has continued to support a long running men's group for men who had experienced sexual abuse as children. The group began in 2013 in response to the large numbers of men in their 40s, 50s and 60s coming forward to report institutional child sexual abuse, predominantly from the Catholic Church. Earlier this year, Ballarat CASA closed the group to new referrals and provided short term groups (10 weeks) alongside the large long running group. A new model has evolved in 2017, where the ongoing men's group meets monthly, in the evening, in a less formal support/social model, with any short term group members given the opportunity to also join this ongoing support/social group.

Ballarat CASA Manager, Shireen Gunn was this year appointed to the Commonwealth Independent Advisory Council for the design and implementation of the Redress Scheme. This has made for a very interesting and productive year and we look forward to continuing to support our clients through this next important phase.

Barwon CASA/ Minerva

In 2016/17 support was provided for 2138 cases through our **therapeutic sexual assault and family violence counselling services** across the Barwon and Wimmera areas. This includes supporting 1,903 people. Of these cases:

- 45 percent related to past sexual assault that occurred more than 12 months ago
- 29 percent related to a recent sexual assault that occurred within the last 12 months
- 14 percent related to the non-offending parent of a victim survivor of sexual assault
- 9 percent related to a recent disclosure of childhood sexual assault

In 2016/17, our **MDC Community Health Nurses** supported 58 women. Presenting issues included:

- physical health
- access to service
- family violence
- isolation
- mental health

In 2016- 2017 our **Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Services (SABTS) Program** in the Barwon and Wimmera areas provided early intervention and support to 111 children and young people:

- 82 percent were male
- 18 percent were female
- 23 percent were aged between 15-19 years
- 46 percent were aged between 10-14 years
- 31 percent were aged between 0-9 years



355 people from across 40 community organisations participated in our **professional training program**.

Our therapeutic services, delivered across the Barwon and Wimmera areas in Victoria, provide trauma informed support and innovative approaches to mitigate the negative impact of family violence and sexual assault in people's lives. Our approach is shaped by contemporary research and evidence that highlights what is most effective when working with people who have been affected by trauma. We utilise creative modalities when working with children, adults and families in their recovery from trauma and favour a strength based approach that supports resilience and restoration of relationships that have been fractured by violence.

"I have received a great service starting right from the first phone call." Barwon Client

Our continuing expansion of our therapeutic approaches during the year includes offering a number of group programs for women and we have increasingly recognised the need for an integrated and meaningful response to mothers and their children who have experienced family violence and are seeking to rebuild their lives.

The range of programs offered demonstrates our belief that we need a tailored and flexible approach to the needs of individuals' and families. We recognise that choice and timing is critical to someone finding the best fit. We continue to extend our innovative approaches and offer an exciting dimension of therapeutic work that develops self awareness, exploration and connection with others.

Our SABTS program provides a vital early intervention response for children and young people who have engaged in problem sexual or sexually abusive behaviours. The program works to understand and address the often complex intertwining of historic, individual and systemic issues that can lead to an ongoing pattern of inappropriate or abusive behaviours, ensuring that those children and young people go on to enjoy respectful and rewarding relationships. Due to increased funding during the year from the Victorian State Government, we have been able to increase our program for older primary and early secondary school aged children presenting with sexually abusive behaviours and have also established a dedicated team of specialist staff for this important area.

CASA House

CASA House is located in Melbourne's CBD and provides services to those who live, work or study in the CBD and an additional 80 suburbs in Melbourne's north-west metropolitan area. The service operates 4 counselling outposts in Broadmeadows, Sunbury, Craigieburn and at RMIT University.

CASA House supported 1216 cases in this year, with 777 people receiving a range of counselling, support and advocacy.



Crisis Care

CASA House provides a 24/7 crisis care response to anyone over the age of 18 who has experienced a recent sexual assault. The service has continued to experience high demand for this support and completed 195 crisis care responses over the year.

Training & Education

CASA house has continued delivering extensive sexual assault training. Along with our regular calendar program of *Responding to Sexual Assault*, and the 2 day *Working with Impacts of sexual assault*, we also provided sessions to Family Planning Victoria, Nursing students at University of Melbourne, and in-service training to nursing, midwifery and medical staff in the Women's emergency care department, clinical midwifery educators and medical staff. Our prevention work involved partnering with homelessness service Launch Housing to deliver a three part series of training on Sexual Assault Prevention with young people. The staff at Launch Housing participated in two days of Responding to Sexual Assault and Train the Trainer in the prevention course. The release of the Change the Course report brought with it many request from Universities to provide Responding to Sexual Assault training and we worked closely with two local universities and one interstate university to provide extensive training to the University counselling teams, human resources, academic boards and security services.

Support Groups

In 2016/17, CASA House ran a number of support groups for victim/survivors of childhood and adult sexual assault, including a trauma-sensitive yoga group.

Gender Diversity

In collaboration with Starlady, Carolyn Gillespie (CASA House) presented at the national Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Women's Health conference in Sydney. Their interactive workshop, entitled "Trans women, Feminine Non-Binary people and Sexual Assault", examined how practitioners could begin to address the issues, utilising both general inclusive principles and those specific to responding to sexual assault. This workshop demystified sexual assault, as well as equipped participants to feel confident in understanding and responding to sexual assault as it is experienced by trans women and feminine non-binary people.

CASA House staff all received training, via a one day workshop in Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusive practice, delivered by Starlady.

Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (ECASA)

Eastern CASA has led several community based projects this year including:

- a dedicated position focusing on community engagement work, through which a range of strategies have been developed to ensure greater consumer participation in ECASA work.
- supporting Restoring Hope, the community based, non-profit organisation for survivors of sexual abuse, established and led by the amazing Kim Elzebaik and, in January, hosting the launch of Restoring Hope's inspiring book, *The Hero's Journey*, which presents stories of the courage and journeys of a diverse group of survivors.



- Targeted liaison with key community services including the local Victoria Police specialist sexual assault team, SOCIT, and the regional family violence service EDVOS. These connections ensure promotion of service but aid in client access

ECASA ran several groups throughout 2016/2017 including a Yoga Group, a monthly Men’s Group, which has been ongoing for the past 5 years, and a Women’s Group.

ECASA also delivered a number of training sessions, including Responding to Disclosure of Sexual Assault (Level 1) & Building Foundations for Working with Adult Survivors of Sexual Assault (Level 2) – which were provided each term in addition to a number of sessions provided in response to specific agency requests for training. This included training provided to Deakin University.

Gatehouse Centre

“My Space” Project:

- The Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation provided funding to assist with the development of our materials for working with vulnerable young women.
- This resource includes group work session plans and materials for 10 psycho-educational sessions for use with vulnerable young people. These session themes include: issues related to violence in relationships, sexual health, safety, and consent and gender issues.
- Whilst this resource was developed from the specific work we did with at risk adolescent girls in DHHS secure services, we envisage that this resource and session guides/materials can be used with other GACE clients, as well as other services working with vulnerable and at risk young people via group work, individual and family sessions and residential care staff.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) Program is an emerging approach for working with children impacted by trauma. The Gatehouse Centre has been piloting an AAT program involving therapy dog, Ruby, and Gatehouse clinician Michelle Atlas.

We received an overwhelming positive response from clients, parents and staff regarding the program. In partnership with researchers from the University of Melbourne, Gatehouse recently conducted a study evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of the program. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from clients, parents, staff and the therapist delivering AAT. The major findings include:

1. Participants found the experience to be positive and would like the program to continue.
2. Uniquely rich data was elicited about the range of ways the Therapy Dog facilitated the psychotherapeutic process. This went beyond sensory regulation, relationship building and mastery, to include deeper therapeutic processes, such as projection and transference of feelings onto the dog.
3. The presence of the therapy dog had an unexpected, strong positive effect on the team at Gatehouse.
4. New data collection tools were specifically designed for the purpose of this research. These tools can continue to be utilised to evaluate and monitor AAT work within a psychotherapeutic framework.



Group Work Program:

Gatehouse Centre has been facilitating a group for adolescent girls since May 2017. This is a small informal group of amazing young women, who meet fortnightly to talk about a range of issues affecting young people. This group was initially designed to run for six weeks however both the facilitators and the young women have seen the therapeutic value in creating a safe and inclusive space to meet and explore issues, normalise experiences and have fun. The group has been described as the favourite part of the facilitator's and young people's weeks and has allowed the young women to share moments of their lives, past and present, and to experience the compassion, empathy and encouragement of their peers as these moments are witnessed and validated.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme

The Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines explain how to share information under Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*. In collaboration with the RCH Social Work team, Gatehouse submitted our response to these draft Guidelines, paying particular attention to how they will affect and impact children and young people.

Training and Education:

Gatehouse staff have commenced providing a number of Training days designed especially for foster carers and kinship carers in regional Victoria in 2017 and 2018. The full day training focuses on caring for young people who have been sexually abused and also young people who may be displaying problem or harmful sexual behaviours.

Cultural Awareness:

Gatehouse has commenced meetings with the Islamic Council of Victoria and is building a relationship with the Muslim community to increase Islamic cultural competency in Gatehouse staff and in the process create a partnership with the Muslim community that would lead to increased confidence within Muslim communities to access Gatehouse services. Gatehouse is also in the process of providing training and professional development to Islamic schools, staff and religious leaders.

Key Note Speaker:

2017 Australian Psychologists and counsellors In Schools (APACS) Conference: Get Smart – Promoting Wellbeing, Inclusion and Educational Engagement

Key note: *Making sense of sibling sexual abuse and supporting young people caught up in the aftermath (without getting caught up in it too)*. By Dr Helen Kambouridis

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse

Numbers of young people from Gatehouse Centre have spoken to, appeared before, written to the commission about their experience of abuse.

In March 2017 the Commission held its final public hearing in Sydney. The hearing inquired into the nature, cause and impact of child sexual abuse and related matters in institutional contexts in Australia. Karen Hogan from Gatehouse Centre was a panel member.



15-17 year-old clients SABTS clients (new Program):

Recommendation 33 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016) states:

The Victorian Government ensure that the Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Service and other suitable treatment programs are available for all age groups up to and including 17-year-olds and resource enhanced delivery of the programs across Victoria.

Some CASA services across the state have been funded to extend their work with clients in line with the Royal Commission recommendations. CASA's include Gatehouse Centre and other CASA's.

Gatehouse Centre: IRIS DATA FINANCIAL YEAR 2016–2017

REFERRAL TYPE	REFERRAL NUMBERS
SASS REFERRALS	1399
SABTS REFERRALS	332
CCU PRESENTATIONS	175

Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA)

Primary Prevention work

In addition to ongoing its regular ongoing counselling and advocacy work, Gippsland CASA was involved in a number of key projects focused on the prevention of gender based violence. The following provides a 'snapshot' of some of GCASA's key prevention projects for 2016/2017:

No Excuses- Latrobe Valley Project: Primary Prevention Strategy-Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA)

Overall Objective: *To promote respectful relationships' education and reduce the incidence of violence in our community.*

No Excuses Latrobe Valley was an arts based community engagement project led by Latrobe Valley Community Choir in collaboration with the School of Hard Knocks and supported by Gippsland service providers, local government, business and the wider community. This program expanded on the work of the Latrobe Valley Community Choir, in collaboration with the internationally recognised School of Hard Knocks, which is based in Melbourne. Performances were intended to raise awareness of social justice issues, whilst continuing the education, development and promotion of music as an avenue to engage the community. Showcasing and highlighting a local arts group available in Gippsland offered opportunities for continued involvement in the arts, as well as important messaging in relation to Family Violence prevention.

No Excuses Latrobe Valley was launched on White Ribbon Day with a free community event at the Moe Town Hall on Saturday 26th November, 2016. This was a socially inclusive event aimed at raising community awareness of family violence. The approach used was that of a contemporary community development strategy.



Orange Round

Orange Round aims to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and children, and drive meaningful change in societal attitudes and behaviours. The concept is an adaptation of the global initiative Orange Day, which was instigated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and occurs on the 25th day of every month.

The Orange Round in Gippsland is a joint-initiative between Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA), Gippsland Women's Health (GWH), GippSport, AFL Gippsland and TRFM Gippsland League. While black armbands traditionally acknowledge loss, GCASA hopes that the orange armbands will come to symbolise respect, dignity and equality.

GCASA notes that sexual and any violence toward women and children has a foundation in the way we think, feel and behave in our everyday lives. This includes the language that we use, that which we may find offensive or amusing, and that which we have adopted as 'normal' and continue to practise without reflection or deeper scrutiny.

The Orange Round continues to be about making an open statement that such behaviour in our community must stop, and the wearing of orange armbands represents a commitment to this. GCASA and our partners continue to represent this:

"Gippsland football and netball clubs will become champions of change when they unite to end men's violence against women and children next month (June 2017).

Since its introduction in 2015, Orange Round has become an annual fixture on the Gippsland football and netball calendar, with more than a dozen clubs across five leagues and competitions set to take part in this year's installment.

Participating clubs will wear orange armbands on game day and host an information session for its players and support staff run by project partners Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault, Gippsland Women's Health, GippSport and AFL Gippsland.

Violence against women and children remains a major issue in Australia".

(from press release LV Express 2017)

Supporting respectful relationships' in schools

This area of GCASA work commenced through an invitation from our MDC partners SOCIT who were presenting in schools re online safety. With SOCIT we continue to re formulate this piece of work, reframe our shared 'messages' into more meaningful content that engages an adolescent audience, boys and girls, and allows opportunities for learning through a mix of mediums and a mix of 'delivery' styles. We commenced planning for this with a workshop in February 2017, facilitated by Ms Nelly Thomas -Melbourne comedian, sexual health educator, ambassador for Jean Hailes For Womens' Health Clinic, etc. This has also assisted in supporting GCASA to develop programs/ presentations that are more relevant and more readily engage boys and young men, as well as girls and young women. The workshop was attended by GCASA reference group members, SOCIT, GCASA. Legislation changes as of 1/7/2017 will also contribute to content of an updated presentation. It is our intention to invite/ include DEECD Respectful Relationships Gippsland coordinators in general future presentations as applicable.



GCASA Training

This year GCASA provided a number of direct training sessions to staff persons from the Queen Elizabeth Centre, the Child First Alliance (representatives from a number of agencies), foster and kinship care providers (both agency employees and foster/ kinship carers), DHHS CP teams, school teacher groups etc. Sessions included topics such as Responding to Sexual Assault, Sexual Abuse, Sexually Abusive Behaviours, Sexual Exploitation etc.

MDC Stories project (Indigenous)

Auntie Gloria Whalan-Aboriginal elder and artist, Uncle Dennis Seymour- Aboriginal elder and artist, and Ms Elen Foy -Aboriginal artist, contributed, as you will know, to the MDC design creations/ artworks. This project is in process and will tell and record their stories, their visions and intentions for their contributions to MDC through written story collections, photographs, video clips etc.

Clemente Project

Federation University have established this program within the Gippsland region. It is a program designed for people, which due to life circumstances, have not been able to access tertiary education. It involved a phased process in supporting people through matching to learning partners, financial assistance and off site lectures and tutorials. GCASA have been involved in the reference/ planning group since Gippsland inception. This program continues with major, life changing 'successes' for many involved. For some, movement to an undergraduate degree at Federation University Churchill campus. This year, through GCASA, the group Igniting Change contributed to ongoing support for program.

Goulburn Valley Centre Against Sexual Assault (GVCASA)

GVCASA has had a year of significant growth and development. Andrea Caia was appointed to the role of Manager in 2016 and has been very focused throughout the year on building a strong team at GVCASA and also on supporting the regional work of Strengthening Hospitals Responses to Family Violence (SHRFV). Goulburn Valley Health was funded by Department of Health and Human Services to be the lead for the SHRFV work in the Goulburn Valley and northeast Victoria. Andrea has been responsible for providing guidance and support not only to Goulburn Valley Health but to a number of other hospitals across the region, assisting in project work groups and delivering training.

GV CASA participated in a number of community events throughout the year, including Shepparton Happy Humans Festival, Rotary Club, Catholic Church Group, Shepparton Law Courts Goulburn Murray Social Work Group and Goulburn Ovens TAFE and delivered the DITTO personal Safety program to 130 Schools and Kindergartens, reaching 8,500 children in the Hume Region.

GV CASA worked hard to achieve accreditation against the DHHS Human Services Standards in March 2017.

GVCASA is a member of a number of committees in the Goulburn Valley including:

- Goulburn Family Integrated Family Violence Network and Working Groups
- Taskforce 1000
- Rumbalara Empowering Women and Children



- Shepparton Family Violence Prevention Network
- Dept. of Education Respectful Relationship
- GV CAMHS (child adolescent mental health service) Stakeholder Reference Group

Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault (LCCASA)

Sexual Assault Services

Sexual assault remains one of the most underreported of personal crimes in Australia. This year our Sexual Assault Services provided assistance to over 1006 people in the Loddon Campaspe Region. Of these, 577 were aged below 19. As well as direct services, we provided advocacy, reports, case conferencing, secondary consultations and support groups.

Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Service

Again this year, referrals into our Problem Sexual Behaviours (PSB) and Sexually Abusive Treatment Service (SABTS) programs well exceed funded targets across our service area. This has been the trend for the past years. Over two thirds of the clients that we see in this program are male. In the past year our combined SABTS programs provided support to 82 children and young people, against a target of 26.

After Hours Service

The After Hours crisis service operates seven days a week for women and children experiencing family violence, and for people who have recently experienced sexual assault across the Loddon Campaspe region. The service works in conjunction with Safe Steps, the Sexual Assault Crisis Line and Victoria Police, to provide a comprehensive response which may include support, advocacy, accommodation, food, clothing and other assistance. Support and wellbeing checks will occur until the person is then referred to the most appropriate service the next working day.

This year the After-Hours service provided a response to 35 family violence incidents and to 16 people that had experienced a recent sexual assault.

Training and Education

Our commitment to training, education and community engagement will be further supported by the creation of a focused training, education and community engagement position to lead and guide our work into the future. This year we provided training to schools, community organisations and community groups to increase their capacity to respond to disclosures, understand the impact of sexual violence and to introduce the underpinning contributing factors as to why it occurs.

LCCASA ran seven workshops during the year for other professionals around how to respond to disclosures and work with people who have experienced sexual assault. The workshops were attended by over 100 participants and included:

- Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Assault (1 day) x 2
- Working with Adolescent Survivors of Sexual Assault x 1
- Working with Adult Survivors of Sexual Assault (2 day) x 1
- Lifeline - Identifying Sexual Assault and Responding to Callers x 1
- Respectful Relationships – Sexual Assault and SABTS
- Latrobe University Student Leader Workshop – Consent



Group Work at LCCASA

At LCCASA we have a solid understanding of trauma and strive to incorporate the research findings about how trauma is processed and what works for people recovering from trauma. This year we extended our services to offer group work. Due to the success of this year's groups we will expand group work next year to include a group for men, another group for

Art Group

This year eight women participated in an eight-week therapeutic art group run by Counsellor Advocates, Asadeh and Louise. All participants were clients of LCCASA who had expressed interest in attending the group. One participant commented that she was not comfortable in groups and that she was likely to struggle with attending and then attended every session.

The goals for the group were to provide a safe forum for women who had experienced sexual assault or child sexual assault, to give social support to one another and to experience a nurturing environment for themselves. It was helpful to have the normalising benefits of meeting other women with similar past experiences, in a supported setting. Additionally, the participants had the opportunity to engage in creative activities and do emotional exploration without expectations. The successful achievement of the goals for the group was demonstrated in the qualitative and quantitative feedback measures provided by the participants. Participants were asked to provide written qualitative and quantitative feedback halfway through and at the completion of the group. The feedback provided was very positive about safety, support, facilitation, the activities and undertaking the group. Participants responded that they had found safety and support in the group. All eight participants indicated that they had found the art group personally helpful and a positive and enjoyable process.

"Helps me to realise I am not alone. Has been nice to meet with a group of women who understand how I feel."

"I have felt calm and positive after the group. Nice to know I am not alone. I have been more positive and kind to myself. I have learnt more about myself. I feel now I am a worthy person."

"Effects are very supportive and encouraging. I have been feeling more confident within myself. Being with a group of ladies that were supportive and non-judgemental, that helped me feel safe. I'm noticing my triggers quicker."

"I felt better each time. I felt very relaxed. I understand a little more about myself. Learning how to express myself."

"Thank you and hope others get to experience art therapy."

Tarregower Program Report

This year saw a substantial increase in referrals at Tarregower Prison with the roll-out of the new service delivery model. LCCASA now provides two days of counselling and two groups for women in Tarregower Prison who have experienced trauma. While most women who access the service have been sexually assaulted, significantly more women have felt confident to access the service for a



wide range of trauma issues, such as family violence. Some women have commented that they had wanted the service previously, but felt less comfortable to attend a specific sexual assault counselling service because of perceptions both that they would have to talk about what had happened, and that “everyone would know” they had experienced sexual assault. The prison community is small, so visibility in accessing services is a challenge for women at Tarrengower. One woman commented that since the change to a broader service “everyone is saying go to CASA”.

The pilot “Breathe it Out” program for women in Tarrengower prison who have experienced trauma began in March 2017. The six-week program was a success and a second group ran over May and June. This program aims to teach women emotional regulation skills by learning breathing and relation techniques which enable them to manage trauma triggers. Women voiced the usefulness of the group through comments such as:

“... I find myself stopping and breathing when I am stressed and anxious”

“I’m now more comfortable with my own space”

“...now when stressed I can just walk away and breathe instead of reacting.”

The program is growing from strength to strength, with a steady increase in interest and registrations. Another group is planned for next year and will be expanded to 13 weeks.

Mallee Sexual Assault Unit

Mallee SAU covers a large area of rural north western Victoria, including some of the most remote areas. Consequently, Mallee SAU provides a large number of outreach counselling clinics. In 2016/2017, these were provided at Robinvale, Swan Hill, Ouyen, Dareton, Wentworth, Balranald, Kerang, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Manangatang, Donald, Birchip, Charlton, Nyah, Lake Boga and the Mallee Track districts.

Mallee SAU is one arm of the larger agency Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Mallee Domestic Violence Services. As the primary agency in the region for the provision of sexual assault and family violence support services, Mallee SAU Mallee DVS is actively involved in a number of key panels, committees and service co-locations, including:

- responsible for coordination of the regional Risk Assessment Management Panel (RAMP)
- manages the Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC), based in Mildura
- leads the coordination of the regional Family Violence programs through chairing the Mallee Family Violence Executive
- Participant in the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFVRAG)

Mallee SAU runs a range of other programs including:

- a number of support groups for survivors of sexual assault
- SABTS
- Safety Hints for Adolescent Relationships (SHARP), a program in schools focused on respectful relationships, delivered in partnership with Victoria Police



- education and training for community and professional groups
- Special Needs Awareness Program (SNAP), a program focused on supporting people with an intellectual disability.

Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault (NCASA)

Group Work

Groups continued to be a key part of NCASA's therapeutic work with clients, with three very different groups being held during this year.

A 10 week Men's Group held in the evening was well attended by clients living in the Northern Region as well as from other parts of metropolitan Melbourne. This annual group was facilitated by counsellor/advocate Cameron Boyd who also plays a key co-ordinating role in CASA's Working with Men Interest Group which is open to counsellor/advocates across the state.

An 8-week group for young women aged 20-25 years old who had experienced sexual assault as a child/adolescent was offered in early 2017, resulting in the formation of strong, ongoing & supportive connections between participants.

Innovative music therapy approaches with sexual assault trauma were also explored this year. Utilising the skills of Phoebe Stretton-Smith, a Master of Music Therapy student, a music therapy group and individual music therapy sessions were offered to NCASA clients during the second half of 2016.

Music Therapy methods utilised included receptive methods such as music listening and discussion and music based relaxation and mindfulness; and active methods such as therapeutic song writing singing and improvisation.

The music therapy group was co-facilitated by a counsellor/advocate and was attended by women aged between 25 and 72 years old.

Individual music therapy sessions were designed with the aim of being relevant to the client's overall therapeutic experience and adding to individual counselling sessions, rather than being a separate 'activities-based' program. This involved collaboration with the client's counsellor allowing three different perspectives to be involved in the therapeutic process – the client as an expert in their own experience, the music therapist contributing perspectives from music therapy, and the counsellor contributing perspectives from counselling and previous work with the client.

Reasons identified by clients for engaging in music therapy included:

- as a means for finding and using their 'authentic voice' (connection with self)
- to explore the relationship between emotions/feeling states and the voice
- to tell a story/voice an experience through songwriting
- creative and emotional exploration, expression and release
- for self-care/to incorporate music into mindfulness practice
- to reconnect with music and explore the role of music in healing



- to reflect and expand on individual uses of music as a resource for health and wellbeing in everyday life

Client feedback regarding both the individual sessions and the group was very positive and highlights potential for further exploration of music therapy as a therapeutic approach for sexual assault trauma survivors.

NCASA Outposts

During 16/17, NCASA developed two new counselling outposts as part of the service's commitment to providing access the Northern region. The new outposts are located at La Trobe University Counselling Service and the Northcote site of Your Community Health Centre (formerly Darebin Community Health Service). Demand for counselling at both services is strong, demonstrating the need for CASAs to provide outpost services. Several training sessions were also provided to La Trobe University and other tertiary educational institutions, highlighting the developing awareness within this sector of the need to build the capacity of staff and students to promote respectful relationships and respond sensitively to disclosures.

NCASA Manager

After 8 years as Manager of NCASA, Charmaine Farrell retired on 30 June 2017. Austin Health is recruiting for a new manager to replace Charmaine.

Ovens Murray Centre Against Sexual Assault

The Ovens Murray CASA team provides a range of counselling and advocacy services to children, women, men and families who have experienced sexual assault. We also provide therapeutic treatment services for children and young people with problem and sexually abusive behaviors. We are a small team and base ourselves out of the Centre Against Violence's main sites situated in Wangaratta and Wodonga. The Ovens Murray CASA team also provide outreach services to people living in Myrtleford, Mansfield and Benalla.

All counsellor advocates have specialist training in this specific field of practice as a way of ensuring that our support to the community is contemporary, responsive, effective and meaningful. This year team members have focused training around extending and consolidating our work with children and young people and, in particular, the supports that we offer in our sexually abusive behavior treatment service. The team show a continued energy and commitment to this work.

Everyone has worked through another fast-paced year seeing changes in both our client work as well as our team.

- Our work with victim survivors of institutional abuse has increased in response to Victoria's Royal Commission into institutional abuse. As a result of this, we have seen an increase in adult male clients seeking therapeutic support and legal advocacy. This work also extended to include a time limited partnership with Beechworth Correctional facility, offering those prisoners accessing the Royal Commission direct support in relation to preparation and debriefing.



- The second part of the year has given the team opportunities to connect strongly with local education and early years services in response to the Victorian governments roll out of the preventative project titled “Respectful Relationships”. Both the sexual assault and family violence teams will continue working in collaboration to deliver consultation and support to teaching, leadership and wellbeing staff across both primary and secondary schools in the district moving into 2018.
- As per recommendations of the Royal Commission into family violence, all SABTS providers were given additional funding and resourcing to increase our current work to include providing a service to 15-17 year old’s and their families. This has brought new energy to our current team as we adapt and increase our knowledge to provide this support to this new client group.

Client statistics

- 628 clients received support from our sexual assault services
- 120 children/young people accessed support from the Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment Service.

Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault (WestCASA)

Wyndham Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC)

The Wyndham Multidisciplinary Centre is the seventh MDC to be built in Victoria. WestCASA and the Gatehouse Centre are in the process of transitioning to become partners with Victoria Police Sexual Offences & Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT), the Westgate Family Violence Unit and Child Protection in the establishment of a Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC) in the City of Wyndham. WestCASA and Gatehouse will transition into the MDC in early to mid-2018. WestCASA and Gatehouse are building effective relationships with all partners to ensure the success of the MDC. The MDC will be a welcoming and safe environment for our service users, ensuring an integrated response with police and child protection.

Specialist Trauma Services for women funded by Corrections Victoria

WestCASA and Loddon-Campaspe CASA have recently expanded their sexual assault counselling services to women in Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC – medium to maximum security) and Tarrangower (low security) prisons to include counselling for women who have experienced family violence and other trauma. This funding and expansion is an outcome of the recommendations of the Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission, recognizing that women in, or exiting prison, are at greater risk of family violence. LCCASA and WestCASA now have more counsellor/advocates in the two prisons providing a comprehensive specialist trauma services.

Statewide Post-release Specialist Trauma Service

WestCASA is implementing and co-ordinating a state-wide specialist trauma service for women released from prison in the past 12 months that will be provided by all CASAs across Victoria. The service will also include training for Community Correctional Services about the impacts of trauma on women in prison. It will also provide a bridge for women exiting prison to support them to access counselling and group work in CASAs in their community.



CASA Forum Members



Photo: Planning Day Mildura Nov 2016.