

2: The SABTS System: 'Who's who in the zoo?'

Victoria's SABTS system

Our current state-wide, legislated system has grown out of a less formal, local service-based treatment system, which began in Victoria in the mid-to-late 1990s.

"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it"
Santayana

While Santayana warned about the perils of 'not learning', there is comfort in having a regulated, predictable and robust service system. This means:

- When we begin work with a new client, our work should look similar to "...what we did before", and
- There should be similarity not only from client to client, but from agency to agency, so that if a client attends a service in one part of the state, they should expect to receive the same quality of service, and approximately the same service response and result as anywhere else in the State.
- Of course, this assumes that our work is 'best practice' to begin with.

It is now over 10 years since our SABTS system was legislated through the Therapeutic Treatment Order approach. What we have today strives to meet regulation, approaches similarity between therapists and agencies, and approaches best practice.

Questions

1. How have we got to where we are now?
2. Who is involved in the Victorian SABTS system?

History

The 1990s

In the 1990s, the treatment of children and young people engaging in Sexually Abusive Behaviours (SABs) looked very different to what we have today.

- The language was different:
 - Young people were referred to in adult terminology,
 - Terms like "sex offender", "perpetrator", "paedophile" and "pervert" were used with adolescents in the same way they were used for adult sex offenders,
- Treatment of 'juvenile sex offenders' (using the language of the times) was linked to criminal conviction:
 - If you were charged and convicted of a sex offence you would, or could, be ordered to treatment.

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Finding a treatment service was difficult. The system as we know it, did not exist. Overseas, and in the US in particular, the 'pioneers' of the field (people such as Gail Ryan and Rob Longo) were lone voices, beginning to be heard. They said that young people who 'sexually offended' were different to adults who engaged in the same behaviours. While Gail and Rob 'knew' these young people were different, the struggle was still to determine 'how' they were different from other youth.

In 1993 the first National Adolescent Perpetrator Network (NAPN) report into Juvenile Offenders was released: *The National Task Force on Juvenile Sexual Offending (1993)*. This report was the first major attempt to provide a set of principles for working with Juvenile Sexual Offenders (JSOs) as juveniles, rather than as 'mini-adults'.

1993 was a busy year for JSO work in Victoria, Australia:

- The *Male Adolescent Program for a Positive Sexuality (MAPPS)* opened for business
- The Children's Protection Society (CPS) began piloting their *Childhood Sexual Assault Treatment Program*. In 1994 this changed to the *Sexual Assault Treatment Program Pilot*.
- The Gatehouse Centre opened.

In the late 1990s, the Australian Childhood Foundation began their program for 'Children under 10 years with problem sexual behaviours'. However, they did not see adolescent sexual offenders until well into the 2000s.

By the end of the decade:

- Some work was being done with adolescents who were sexually offending, but there was no unified, systematic response,
- A small number of services offered therapy to, mainly, convicted adolescent sexual offenders,
- There were no defined pathways into treatment without a criminal conviction and an order to attend treatment,
- Treatment models were based on adult sexual offender treatment methods,
- Child Protection responses were inadequate for young people who sexually offended – a report could not be made on a young person who offended, but only on a child deemed 'at risk' from the offending youth,
- A small but significant number of "voices in the wilderness" were talking about why young people may be different to adults who sexually offend,
- The Children's Protection Society formalised their 'offenders program' into the Sexual Abuse Counselling Prevention Program (SACPP),
- MAPPS continued their work.

The 2000s

In the early 2000s there was movement towards a comprehensive system for treating sexually abusive youth:

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- CPS continued to run SACPP,
- MAPPS continued its work,
- South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) engaged with CPS to begin a program for juveniles who were engaging in sexual offending – called Southern SACPP, from Dandenong in the South East,
- The Gatehouse Centre began a program working with the same population,
- Later SECASA began an intellectual disability-focused program for adolescent offenders: *Sexual Abuse Intellectual Disability (SAID)*,
- Then both of SECASA's programs were folded into the AWARE program.

In the mid-2000s the CASA Forum made a submission to the state government, who recognised the need for a comprehensive therapeutic approach to adolescents who exhibited sexually abusive behaviours. Working parties began to set up a state-wide system to provide therapy across Victoria at no cost to sexually abusive young people under 18 years.

While there was a push to develop programs within an appropriate child-development framework, destructive thinking was still demonstrated at times. The Herald Sun issue September 4, 2006 had a banner headline "Boy 4, a 'sex fiend'", which illustrates how problematic the thinking about sexual abuse could be.

In 2007 the *Children, Youth & Families Act (2005)* was enacted. It contained the Therapeutic Treatment Orders legislation – a framework providing therapeutic treatment for young people aged 10 to under 15 years. Treatment was expected to be undertaken voluntarily, but if a young person and/or their family members, were "unable or unwilling" to enter treatment, a Child Protection Therapeutic Treatment Order could be issued (see '[4: TTOs – An Overview](#)').

Treatment was organised geographically across 13 locations provided by 11 CASAs, the Children's Protection Society and the Australian Childhood Foundation. Berry Street in Shepparton initially also provided treatment services.

By 2010 the system had been evaluated by Success Works (Synergistic) with unreleased, but apparently positive, results. Shortly after, the government doubled the number of funded treatment targets.

Today

The Therapeutic Treatment system is being expanded to include young people up to 18 years, with appropriate changes to Child Protection legislation. The SABTS system has evolved into a robust response to youth who sexually harm, and is in strong demand. The system has a 'best-practice' reputation across this country and in the United States as well.

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Who's who (and what) in the zoo?

There are several components in the TTO system, both formal and informal – the most important being:

1) Services

The following agencies are funded to provide therapeutic treatment to young people engaging in SABs:

- South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA)
- Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital (RCH)
- Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF)
- Children's Protection Society (CPS)
- Loddon Campaspe CASA (LCCASA)
- Ballarat CASA
- South West CASA (SWCASA)
- Upper Murray Centre Against Violence (UMCAV)
- Mallee Sexual Assault Unit (Mallee SAU)
- Goulburn Valley CASA (GVCASA)
- Barwon CASA (including Wimmera)
- Male Adolescent Program for a Positive Sexuality (MAPPS) – facilitated by the Youth Health and Rehabilitation Service (YHARS) located at Parkville Youth Justice Precinct. MAPPS:
 - Is based on a cognitive-behaviour model.
 - Incorporates attitudinal and cognitive restructuring techniques, social skills, relapse prevention, victim awareness and education on sex and sexuality.

2) The Victorian Government DHHS Child Protection program

This program is the interface for TTO work by SABTs agencies and the DHHS, especially when a young person is subjected to a TTO. Because the TTO is a Child Protection order, young people on a TTO are case managed by a CP case manager.

3) Legislation: CY&FA (2005)

TTO Legislation is contained in the Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) under Division 3:

- S.244-245 "When is a child in need of Therapeutic Treatment?"
- S.246-251 "Therapeutic Treatment Orders", and
- S.252-254 "Therapeutic Treatment (Placement Orders)".

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4) The TTO Board

The members of the Therapeutic Treatment Board are appointed by the Minister (responsible for Child Protection). They provide advice about granting TTOs.

5) CEASE

CEASE is the peak body representing the Therapeutic Treatment service system and has open membership to anyone who is employed within the system and associated agencies.

CEASE:

- Publishes and administers the Standards of Practice for the sector,
- Is responsible in conjunction with ANZATSA, for the bi-monthly training which is funded by DHHS and provided to clinicians working within the system,
- Has a monthly meeting where current issues related the system can be discussed and addressed.

6) ANZATSA

The Australian and New Zealand Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abuse (ANZATSA) is the professional association for all those who work in the sector across Australia and New Zealand. ANZATSA has close ties with, and auspices CEASE, and co-runs the bi-monthly training with CEASE.

7) Victoria Police

Victoria Police plays a significant role in the SABTs system. There are Victoria Police members on the TTO Board and Victoria Police makes referrals to both the Board and to treatment agencies directly for TTO voluntary treatment. Referrals and submissions made by Victoria Police directly to the Board *must* be considered by the Board (other referrals can be redirected prior to reaching the Board).

8) SORA and the SOR

The Sex Offender Register Act (SORA) and the Sex Offending Register (SOR), whilst not directly associated with the TTO system, should be understood by you, as they are a 'parallel service'. You can read about the Act at:

[www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt5.nsf/d1a8d8a9bed958efca25761600042ef5/3423431bab3fc53dca2577ce000ffe50/\\$FILE/04-56a034.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt5.nsf/d1a8d8a9bed958efca25761600042ef5/3423431bab3fc53dca2577ce000ffe50/$FILE/04-56a034.pdf)

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9) The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse

Volume 10 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse is all about therapeutic services for sexually abusive youth. Victoria was well represented during the Royal Commission, especially in regards to Therapeutic Treatment Services.

To conclude

If you understand the various components in the SABTS system you will be able to:

- Consider the best possible approach to each case, and
- Access various parts of the system where and when required.

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