



CASA Forum

Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Inc

Annual Report

July 2007

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June 2008

VICTORIAN CENTRES AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT FORUM PHILOSOPHY

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

- Sexual assault is both a consequence and a reinforcer of the power disparity existing between men and women/children.
- Sexual assault occurs along a continuum of violent 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: and rape with physical violence and threat to life.
- The impact of sexual assault on the lives of victim/survivors is multi-faceted and complex. It included emotional, social, psychological, legal, health and political consequences. In order to facilitate a victim/survivor's recovery from sexual violence, the Forum recognizes the importance of responding to each aspect in an appropriate and effective manner.
- The impact of sexual assault can be compounded by factors relating to the stratification of society by gender, culture, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, ability and socio-economic class.

Consistent with the above knowledge is the belief that:

- sexual assault is a crime against the individual and society. The entire community and all tiers of government should take responsibility for its occurrence and consequences and work towards its elimination.
- all CASAs must work toward the empowerment of service users, through the adoption of a service management (victims' right advocacy) model where the focus of service provision must be to recent and past victim/survivors of sexual assault. Within this model service users are offered:
 - choices and information about the services:
 - help with looking at their options:
 - support in making informed choices and decisions in regards to the system with which they will come into contact.
- the experience and resulting needs of victim/survivors of sexual assault must influence the scope and direction of services provided by CASAs.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum is committed to developing and implementing strategies that will:

- ensure victim/survivors of sexual assault have access to services which are responsive and appropriate to their needs, empowering the service users to make informed choices.
- ensure provision of accessible, sensitive, confidential and culturally and developmentally appropriate quality services.
- ensure treatment services are provided to children and young people with problem sexual behaviours and sexually abusive behaviours.
- enable CASAs to provide high quality services based on best practice through workforce development.
- ensure that the education and training of health workers, legal personnel and allied professionals reflects and understanding of and a sensitivity to the needs and concerns of victim/survivors of sexual assault.
- work to prevent women, children and men becoming victims of sexual assault, through community and professional education, public awareness strategies and media.
- ensure that government policy and the practices of government bodies are relevant and responsible to the needs of victims/survivors of sexual assault.
- participate in regional, state and national planning processes that have an impact on services for women and children.
- advocate for the adequate resourcing of CASAs across the state.
- participate in or facilitate research about sexual assault of women, children and men to enhance society's understanding of the sexual assault area.

STRUCTURE

Membership

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

Register of Members for 2007/2008

Shireen Gunn	Ballarat CASA
Pam O'Neill/Barbara Henry	Barwon CASA
Helen Makregiorgos/Linette Harriott	CASA House
Judy Flanagan	Eastern CASA
Karen Hogan	Gatehouse Centre
Margaret Uebergang	Gippsland CASA
Judy McHugh	Goulburn Valley CASA
Carolyn Wallace/Eillean Oates	Loddon Campaspe CASA
Joanne Sheehan	Mallee SAU
Kath/McCarthy	Northern CASA
Carolyn Worth	South Eastern CASA
Helen Wilson	South Western CASA
Kerry Burns	Upper Murray CASA
Deb Bryant	West CASA
Joanne Bates	Wimmera CASA
Pauline Gilbert	Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Meetings

In accordance with the rules of the Incorporated Association, in 2007/2008 the Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum met eleven times and, in addition held the 2007/2008 Annual General Meeting in Melbourne on 13th November 2007. A planning/development day for CASA Forum was held on 12th November, where a Forum strategic plan was developed. The agenda for monthly meetings was restructured to reflect the strategic plan. Separate metro and rural managers meetings are being held bi monthly. With an ever increasing CASA Forum workload, which is being shared among managers, the need for a Secretariat continues to be an issue.

In 2007/2008 the Forum met bi monthly with the Department of Human Services Office for Children. Jan Thompson, then Liz Olle and Madeleine Oakes.

Visitors to CASA Forum during 2007/08 included

- Charter of Human Rights Harinder Grewal, Community Educator
- Therapeutic Treatment Board Secretariat Lisa Rodda
- Young Earth re CASA Website Juliet Summers
- Sentencing Advisory Council Evaluation; Success Works Debbie King
- Australian Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health, Anne Laure Couineau
- National Council to Reduce Violence Victorian Representative Melanie Heenan
- Victim Impact Statements Suzanne Whiting and Melissa Griffiths
- Victorian Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Coordination Office, new Police Code of Practice Sharon Hunter
- Rape Law Reform, Louise Akenson
- Department Of Justice, Forensic Nurse Project, Denise Taylor and Janice Watt
- Department of Human services Children Youth and Families Graham Brewster

Public Officer/Convenor

The Forum appoints a Public Officer in accordance with the rules. The Public Officer is the initial and main contact point for the Forum. In 2007/2008 Karen Hogan Manager of the Gatehouse Centre commenced in the role of Public Officer/Convenor. Barbara Henry, Manager Barwon CASA was elected in February 2008 Treasurer of the CASA Forum and Kerry Burns, Manager Upper Murray CASA continued as Co-Convenor of the Forum

Venue

CASA Forum is indebted to the Justice Department, Victoria and then the Inter Country Adoptions Department in March 2008 for the provision of a central meeting place in the CBD in Melbourne

MAIN ACTIVITIES:

CRISIS CARE:

Sexual Assault Crisis Line

- The Sexual Assault Crisis line (SACL) manager provided monthly updates on the number of Crisis Care Calls and the number of coordinated CASA services provided for recent sexual assault victims across Victoria
- In February 2008 SACL commenced providing the After Hours Crisis Care Telephone response for Yarrow Place South Australia
- SACL require accommodation as the Royal Women's Hospital moved site in 2008 but did not provide a facility for SACL
- CASAs provided more than 950 Crisis Care Services to recent victims of Sexual Assault. These included over 1,600 hours of crisis care services to victims/survivors with an average of 3 hours of service for each victim/survivor

Crisis Care Services

There has been a successful implementation of a number of newly established Crisis Care Services. All new services were operational by the 1st July 2007 and have now completed a years' work.

- **Eastern CASA Maroondah Hospital**, signed a Protocol between Maroondah Hospital and the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and have seen referrals increase over the months since February
- **At Warrnambool CASA** the demand is growing after a slow start
- **At Upper Murray CASA** the service demand is growing as the local community becomes aware that the service can be accessed after hours for crisis care as well as during business hours.
- **Pen SAC** after negotiations with VIFM commenced Crisis Care Services in February 2008.

Forensic Medical Services and Forensic Medical services

- CASAs service continue to work with the Victorian Institute of Medical Services (VIFM) and the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical (VFPMS) to provide best practice for the adults, young people and children who are victims of sexual assault
- The shortage of forensic medical practitioners particularly in some rural areas continues to be an issue.
- The Forensic Nurse Advisory Committee that is overseen by the Department of Justice continues to explore service models for Victoria. CASA is represented on this Committee
- DOJ has undertaken a process to examine the current crisis care service system to victims of Sexual Assault. (See separate report)

State-wide Sexual Assault Crisis Care Service development

In August 2008 the Justice Department has undertaken a process to examine the current Crisis Care Service System to Victims of Sexual Assault

- Justice Dept
- Victoria Police
- VIFM
- VFPMS
- CASAs
- SACL and
- Forensic Nurses

were among the groups who attended the Workshop in August 2008 to examine current practices and to explore further models of service for Victoria.

Work is still being undertaken to further develop these plans for Victoria.

COUNSELLING AND ADVOCACY

- CASAs across Victoria provided over 14,5000 counselling services to victims of sexual assault in the last year.
- Over 80% of clients were female
- Approximately 30% of clients requiring a service were under the age of 18 years
- DHS Waiting List funding continues to assist the Waiting Lists for children and young people
- Waiting Lists for adult survivors of sexual assault continues to be lengthy in most CASAs
- CASAs continue to provide services to more than 48 Out posted services across Victoria as well as at the CASA main sites in the regional locations.

Demand Management Framework

This project was initiated by the Department of Human Services. It was intended to standardise the management of Waiting Lists and of priority care. The focus was on the needs of children and young people. It has produced guidelines for field use.

Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services

CASA Forum members have been funded to provide Assessment and Treatment services to children and young people with problem sexual behaviours (PSB) and sexually abusive behaviours (SAB).

This Program has been developed in conjunction with the new legislation in the Children, Youth and families Act 2005. The Children's Court can now place children aged between 10 -15 years on a Therapeutic Treatment Order (TTO) who then attend treatment for up to 12 months.

- South Eastern CASA and Gatehouse Centre have provided the **Training for the TTO, PSB and SAB** Programs throughout Victoria. CASAs provide these services to children and young people who are referred with SAB and PSB. CASAs around the state are well positioned to undertake this therapeutic work with these children and young people as many of them present with trauma issues and some childhood sexual assault history

CASA Program Issues:

- increasing demand for all services across the State.
- waiting list funding and the possibility of it becoming ongoing funding is being explored
- staff retention remains a difficulty particularly in the rural areas
- The CASA Standards of Practice Manual has been updated and has been re-written in 2008. To be re-launched in November 2008.
- IRIS data collection continues to be improved and redefined. An Annual Data Report is nearing completion for 2007/08
- counselling in female and male prisons is provided in regional facilities
- secretariat support for the Forum is being sought as work loads increase. Improved outcomes for the Forum will be achieved if Secretariat support is found
- subpoenas and FOI Requests to all CASAs increasing and time consuming
- accreditation for stand alone CASAs and the cost associated with the process

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

CASAs provide Training and Community Education to many audiences through the State. The state-wide Calendar of CASA Training and Group Work activity continues to be distributed widely.

Sexual Assault Workforce Development Project (SAWFDP)

CASA Forum won the tender in partnership with Royal Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) to implement, manage and monitor this project. Funding has been provided by the Victorian Government to improve the quality and consistency of sexual assault responses through **Specialist Workforce Development**.

- An Essential Foundations SAWFDP Program and an Advanced SAWFDP program have been run for all Victorian services.

TOPICS have included:

- the legal system
- working with adults
- working with children
- disability and sexual assault

TOPICS planned and booked include:

- Creative therapies
- Train the trainer
- Trauma attachment and brain development for children
- Working with people with complex mental health issues

The program includes training on best practice approaches and models for working with victim/survivors of sexual assault. It includes the development of skills and expertise in working with children and young people. Ultimately the impact of training will lead to better outcomes for victim/survivors of sexual assault. An extensive Evaluation Program is being undertaken by RMIT. Evaluation to date has been very positive with over 90% of participants reporting that the workshops have been excellent.

Education Department and CASAs responding to allegations of Student Sexual Assault

CASAs have worked with the Department of Education, Employment and Training to develop policy and protocol in order to improve responses to sexual assault allegations. CASAs have produced 'Student Cards' and distributed them to all secondary schools to offer students access to CASAs directly.

CASA Forum continues to present to:

- Deakin University
- Victoria Police SOCA Training
- Victoria Police Detective training,
- Specialist Assessment training
- DHS Child Protection
- Melbourne University

New Publications

- Student cards with CASA information
- Age Appropriate Sexual Behaviours in Child and Young People – for Parents and Carers
- CASAs multi lingual Booklets

PARTNERSHIPS

Policy Development and Structural Advocacy

- State Wide Advisory Committee to Prevent Sexual Assault
- Family Violence State wide Advisory Committee
- AFL Working Group
- AASW Special Interest Group
- CEASE Peak body for SAB and PSB
- VIFM CASA VFPMS liaison group
- Victorian University Police Research Advisory Committee
- Child Safety Commissioner Sector Consultation Group
- Sexual Offences-Women With Cognitive Impairment
- Elder Abuse Advisory Committee
- Victorian Women and Mental Health Network
- Female Genital Mutilation Working Group

- State Wide Sexual Assault Workforce Development Project Reference Group
- Sexual Assault and ID Reference Group
- NASASV Board
- Demand Management Framework For Sexual Assault
- EVAs Working Group

National issues

- **NASASV Board** 2 CASA representatives continue to be active members of this Board. A proposal from NASASV has been developed for a Nationwide 24/7 Sexual Assault Telephone and Online Service.
- **Northern Territory** in July 2008 time was spent in NT with staff from Northern Territory SARCs exploring Models for remote Aboriginal Communities. In August 2008 training was provided in Darwin and Alice Springs exploring approaches to children and young people with problem sexual behaviours and sexually abusive behaviours.

State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault

Met late 2007 to discuss future directions and issues. Prevention was regarded as a high priority and also media attention to prevention. The use of VATEs as standard procedure (currently only available to children and women and men with an intellectual disability) was seen as an important reform for victim survivors.

Media Contacts and requests

- Age
- Herald Sun
- Reuters
- Border mail
- ABC TV and radio
- 3AW
- Channel 7, 9 and 10
- Regional media across Victoria
- freelance journalists
- various magazines
- AAP

Topics included:

- court cases and Appeals
- drink spiking
- recent abductions and possible sexual assaults
- the arts
- government legislation

- child protection issues
- indigenous issues
- community debate on sexual assault and its cause
- the education system
- sexual assault in schools

Victoria Police

- the Victoria Police Code of Practice for the investigation of Sexual Assault continues to be re developed and after consultation with CASAs is soon to be re released.
- CASA Forum representatives continue to provide training to 2 SOAC Officers training programs at the Police Academy and for the Detective Training Course at Port Melbourne.
- The SOCIT in Mildura and Frankston are being evaluated by Deakin University.
- Proposed changes to the policy of SOACs having to wear uniform was taken up with the Chief Commissioner by the CASA Forum. Choice of uniform was again permitted

SOCIT

Located in Mallee SAU Mildura and Frankston SE CASA are the two SOCIT pilot sites.

An Evaluation is underway by Deakin University looking at best practice guidelines of the Multidisciplinary Centres with input from key stakeholders and a comparison of sites in Gippsland CASA and West CASA Footscray, where CASA and police services are located in separate organizations.

Police and CASA workers working within the model report favourably at the benefit of working with victim survivors from statement-taking through investigation to trial.

Family Violence

- State Wide Integrated Family Violence Service Reform:

a number of CASAs across Victoria have formally joined with Family Violence Services to improve service provision and responses to victims of family violence in keeping with State Government policy of integrating service provision and the expectation that key services such as domestic violence, sexual assault, police, courts and housing services will work together both at a strategic and service delivery level.

Consultations and Submissions

- Meeting with Minister Morand March 2008
- Australia's Children; Safe and Well. "A National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children." A Discussion paper and submission May 2008

- “Because Mental Health Matters:” A New Focus for Mental Health and Well Being Victoria. Consultation Paper May 2008
- Abortion Law Reform, comment on the VLRC Report into the Decriminalisation of Abortion July 2008
- Sentencing Advisory Council
- Elder Abuse
- Equal Opportunity Review
- National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children, consultation presentation and submission
- Coalition for Change DHS Child Youth and Families, Every Child Every Chance, July 2008
- Victorian Women and Mental Health Network, Nowhere To Be Safe -women’s experience of mixed sex psychiatric wards
- Justice Legislation (Sex Offences Procedure) Bill 2008

Research

- “Adult Sexual Assault: An evidence based policy, practice and advocacy model for Victoria Police” ARC Linkage grant and Ballarat University and Melbourne University
- Victoria University Compassion Fatigue and Stress experienced by Therapists working with Victims of Crime
- “Towards An Understanding of Children and Young People in need of Therapeutic Treatment Orders in Victoria 2008” Vicki Quinton Gatehouse Centre RCH
- Australian Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health, promoting the use of evidence-based treatment of posttraumatic mental health: CASAs and Melbourne University
- Vic Health and Dept of Education “Does your organization provide secondary schools with respectful/healthy relationships’ education?”
- “Sibling Sexual Abuse”: A collaborative, action research approach with therapists to develop best practice models with families, victims and offenders 2008 Helen Kambouridis Gatehouse Centre RCH and Latrobe university
- “Raped by a Partner” Women’s Health Goulburn North and East and UMCASA with support from GV CASA
- “Towards Healing” Australian Catholic University Arrigo Donss

CASA Forum Website

- Website updated
- CD distributed with content of new resources, multi lingual resources, PDFs of all CASA Publications
- SECASA youth project Myspace was highlighted and issues arising re accessing young people via the internet and other electronic means developed using new web based technologies.