

Annual Report

2015-2016

Members

Convenor: Jane Vanderstoel - WestCASA
Co-convenor: Helen Bolton- Barwon CASA
Treasurer: Joanne Sheehan-Paterson
Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Inc
Media: Carolyn Worth - South Eastern CASA

Andrea Caia – Goulburn Valley CASA
Carolyn Gillespie - CASA House
Charmaine Farrell- Northern CASA
Di Rokvic – Sexual Assault Crisis Line
Fiona Boyle - Gippsland CASA
Jenna Abbot/Kate Wright - Loddon Campaspe CASA
Judy Flanagan - Eastern CASA
Karen Hogan – Gatehouse Centre
Kerry Burns - Centre Against Violence
Mary Clapham- South Western CASA
Shireen Gunn – Ballarat CASA

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

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



CASA Forum acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Contact: Jane Vanderstoel, WestCASA, P.O. Box 443, Footscray, Victoria 3011 Australia
Email: jane@westcasa.org.au Mobile: 0417 569 019 Telephone: (03) 9687 5811

Farewell to Judy Flanagan

CASA Forum were saddened to farewell Judy Flanagan, Manager of Eastern CASA after 25 years in the CASA sector. For many years Judy managed Loddon-Campaspe CASA leaving to establish our newest CASA at Eastern Health.

Judy's knowledge, drive, advocacy and capacity will be missed. Judy convened CASA Forum a number of times and led the Forum through some important governance processes and our AGMs.

Judy was a great relationship builder with Victoria Police, Department of Human Services and other Government Departments. Judy also had the reputation to understand and be able to navigate IRIS (our data collection system) better than anyone.

Judy used her compassion for the work to develop really useful projects. Over a number of years Judy worked with PapScreen Victoria (PSV) to increase the skills and knowledge in both CASAs and PSV to improve access for women who experience sexual assault. The project included CASAs training PSV nurses and vice versa leading to a list of CASA trained nurses that CASA Counsellor/Advocates could refer women directly to. The project also developed posters and information sheets for women to remind them and their Counsellor/Advocates to talk about this issue as part of the counselling.



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

Introduction

The Victorian CASA Forum is the peak body of 14 Centres Against Sexual Assault and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours). Together we work to ensure that women, children and men who experience sexual assault have access to comprehensive and timely support and intervention to address their needs. We also work towards the primary prevention of sexual violence through community and professional education, informing government policy, advocating for law reform and facilitating research to increase community understanding of the nature and incidence of sexual assault. This work is our common foundation.

There is diversity among our services, demonstrating independence in service delivery model developments and responsiveness to the unique geographic and community needs of our regions. Some CASAs respond to women and children seeking support when experiencing family violence. Some CASAs are providing services for children under 10 with problem sexual behaviours and young people 10-14 with sexually abusive behaviours. Also, a small number of CASAs work with young people with sexually abusive behaviours through to 18 years of age. This place based model has allowed for innovation and agility across the state and within regions.

In 2015/2016 CASA Forum members concentrated their cooperative efforts on a range of strategic endeavours which will be described in this report.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has continued its examination and hearings on failures of institutions to appropriately or adequately respond to disclosures of sexual abuse. What is becoming more apparent through the evidence given to the Commission is the lifelong impacts of both the experience of sexual assault and any response that provides safety, belief in the disclosure and treatment of the offender as a criminal.

Across the state, CASAs have assisted a number of clients to prepare submissions and to give evidence to the Royal Commission and all CASAs have experienced an increase in client demand from people who have experienced institutional sexual assault. Ballarat CASA has been supporting a group of men who were abused in the Catholic Church and other Institutions and was very involved in supporting them through the Commission hearings in Ballarat, Melbourne and in Rome. Ballarat CASA has also written submissions about the redress scheme, towards healing and civil litigation to the Royal Commission. Northern CASA supported several women with disabilities to tell their stories to the Commission as it heard the stories of people with a disability who had experienced institutional sexual abuse and investigated their particular vulnerability and needs in receiving institutional care. CASA Forum has also responded to the Royal Commission's call for submissions to a number of Issues Papers including Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children in Out of Home Care, Civil Litigation, Redress Schemes and Experiences of Police and Prosecution Responses. Gippsland CASA made a submission in relation to advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services.

CASAs have also been consulted on a range of issues giving expert opinions on matters such as counselling and psychological care, case notes, out of home care, family dynamics and disclosure of institutional child sexual abuse. Support has been provided to the Australian Institute of Family Studies with research undertaken specifically for this Royal Commission.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence

CASA Forum has participated in the making submissions, giving evidence and participating in a number of forums that contribute to the knowledge and findings of the commission. Since the handing down of the report CASA Forum has also been involved in the processes and partnerships that will assist in decision-making about the future responses to family violence.

Demand for services across all CASAs has increased steadily over the past four years as the attention both Royal Commissions have received in the media. The message has been clearly given that perpetrators need to be held accountable and that the impacts of sexual assault can be lifelong. The Victorian government has provided additional funds to CASAs in 2015-16 to address long waiting times for sexual assault support services.

National Association of Services Against Sexual Assault (NASASV)

CASA Forum recognises the importance of a national approach to addressing sexual violence and is represented on the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) the peak body for organisations which work with people experiencing sexual violence. In 2015 Joanne Sheehan-Paterson took up the role of chair and along with Helen Bolton are the current Victorian representatives.

During 2015 NASASV launched the recently redeveloped *National Standards of Practice for Sexual Assault Services*.

CASA Forum, and all States and Territories have contributed joint effort in developing the National Standards that act as a guide and point of reference to define and promote quality sexual assault services across Australia.

Some of the activities which NASASV have undertaken during 2015 – 2016 include:

- Various meetings with members and representatives of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to discuss ongoing issues and services.
- Engagement with Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) including representation on its Executive and Advisory Body; presenting papers and perspectives on sexual violence to domestic violence providers; commenting on AWAVA, Government, and international policy documents in relation to sexual violence including Australia's presentation to United Nations women's policy forum.
- Engagement with relevant national organisations including ANROWS (National Centre of Excellence) regarding the national research agenda and assessment of research proposals;
- Our Watch (Foundation) regarding primary prevention; and the ABS (national safety survey).
- Engagement in a range of national consultations under the National Partnership to Eliminate Violence Against Women and their Children.
- ANROWS – Practitioner Engagement Group Consultations.
- Our Watch – Technical Advisory Group, and Our Watch Judging Panel Representation for the National Our Watch Media Awards, for exemplary reporting to end violence against women.

The sexual assault sector encompasses both Government and non-Government services with a range of different client groups, service profiles and practice frameworks. There is significant ongoing change in the Australian context of the delivery of sexual assault services.

Multi Disciplinary Centres (MDCs)

MDCs involve multiple agencies working collaboratively to provide an integrated and holistic response to victims of sexual assault from a single location. Better integration and co-location of various agencies has the capacity to significantly improve the response to sexual offending. The MDCs include specialist police investigators (SOCIT), CASAs and Child Protection. Bendigo and Morwell MDCs were both opened in late 2015. Across the state there are now six MDCs operational and another announced to be built in the City of Wyndham which will include family violence police. The MDCs have become a model for a best practice response to both children and adults who have experienced sexual assault. MDCs now operate at Mildura, Geelong, Morwell, Bendigo, Seaford and Dandenong.

The provision of community health nurses in MDCs is a new aspect of support and specialist health care to people who have experienced sexual assault. These services have a focus on health and well-being, assessing health needs as well as providing health information and education. CASA Forum looks forward to an evaluation of the model of the community nurses in the MDCs that will identify the type of support provided and any gaps in the model.

The MDCs aim to:

- Improve and integrate the investigation of sexual offences and child abuse
- Improve the quality of evidence in sexual offences and child abuse cases
- Improve support for victims
- Increase reporting of sexual offences and reduce attrition
- Improve the capacity of agencies to work collaboratively

Statewide MDC Advisory Committee

This committee comprises Victoria Police, DHHS (human services, health and child protection representation) Department of Justice & Regulation, Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, CASA and Victoria Police. Their role is one of governance, state wide coordination, development and innovation within the MDC model. The decision making and work of this group is also guided by the findings and recommendations from the MDC evaluation and the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Victoria Police

CASA Forum participated in the review of family violence education and training to improve Victoria Police capabilities in family violence responses. The invitation came from the new Assistant Commissioner for Family Violence, Dean McWhirter and Assistant Commissioner Kevin Casey, People Command. From this consultation e-learning modules were developed, specific issue quick guides, a risk assessment ready reckoner and a review of its frontline education approach.

The new Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault was launched by Victoria Police. CASA Forum participated on a working group formed to undertake the review.

Workshops for officers entering Sex Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT) have continued to be facilitated regularly by CASA managers at the police academy.

Police/CASA liaison meetings are held quarterly across all regional areas to ensure positive relations are maintained and issues are resolved quickly as well as fostering understanding of each other's work.

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)

Every second month we welcome representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services to consult about legal and policy domains and their relationship to our practice. Through use of the specialist knowledge held in our field we clarify, lobby, raise relevant issues and provide information to State government relating to sexual assault work. We remain connected through Marita Nyhuis, Amanda Thompson and Kate Waite and thank them for their ongoing support.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Quality Standards

All CASAs are quality accredited against the DHHS standards and continue to improve their services and organisations. CASA Forum representation on a departmental advisory group has enabled feedback to be provided about particular aspects of quality reviewing in relation to service delivery to children and adults who have experienced sexual assault. We have contributed to the development of the Child Safe Standards and welcome the possible improvements across sectors.

CASA Forum Annual Planning Day

Managers of Victorian CASAs attended the annual CASA Forum Planning Day in November 2015 in Warrnambool hosted by South West CASA. Each year, this provides an opportunity for managers to review the work of the previous year, celebrate outcomes, strategically review the landscape for opportunities, and to set goals for the coming year. Given that the work of CASA Forum relies on all managers to contribute to our work, we are proud of our achievements.



Visitors to CASA Forum during 2015-16

- Marita Nyhuis, Amanda Thompson, Kylie Hadyn, DHHS
- Claire Sargent, Director, Professional Services, Anglican Church.
- Patrick Tidmarsh & Nick Densley - Victoria Police SOCIT Coordination Unit
- Ray Carroll – Manager of Monitoring Programs and Services, Commission for Children & Young People - report '*As A Good Parent Would*'
- Marika Manioudakis - Smart Safe+ Project
- Catherine Barrett – Older Women's Rights at Home & in Care Projects
- Kim Elziabek – Restoring Hope
- Marnie Wilson - PAP Screen Victoria
- Emily MacGuire – Our Watch – Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS Pilot Project)

Conference presentations:

- Ending Domestic Violence Conference, October 2015 – Susan MacDougall
- The 4th National Elder Abuse Conference, February 2016 –Charmaine Farrell
- National Sexual Violence Conference: Walk the Walk - [A joint approach to reducing and responding to sexual violence](#)', February 2016 - Carolyn Worth (York, England)
- Strengthening Hospital Responses to Violence Against Women Forum for hospital executives, directors and senior managers, April 2016 – Charmaine Farrell
- Supported Residential Services - half day forum for all SRS proprietors and their managers in the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and inappropriate behaviours and proprietors and provision of housing in ways that respects residents' rights and empowers them in relation to this issue.

Sexual Assault Workforce Development

2016 marks the tenth year of the Workforce Development Program which is managed by a reference group made up of CASA Forum and other providers of sexual assault support services. 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.

The Workforce Development Program provides a total of eleven workshops (22 days). This allows for some training to be organised around visiting overseas or interstate experts. The program is also responsible for maintaining and distributing the CASA Forum Community Education Package.

Several of the workshops planned for 2015/16 were repeats of successful workshops well attended and evaluated in previous years. Many of these workshops are considered as core training by workers across the field. These included; working with men who have been sexually abused, sand play therapy, working with victim survivors with Cognitive Impairment and/or complex communication needs, Specialist Assessments, Keeping Mothers in the Loop, Sleep Treatment issues and Feminist Counselling and Advocacy.

Essential Foundations workshops are designed to meet the needs of workers new to the sexual assault sector. In the past year, three, two day workshops and six, one day essential foundations workshops were completed.

Advanced Workshops are designed to meet the needs of more experienced sexual assault workers. Five, two day advanced workshops and three, two day advanced workshops were run in the last year.

Cost benefit analysis of CASA services - SASS and SABTS

Gippsland CASA has recently commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to undertake a cost benefit analysis of the CASA services. Their report demonstrates very clearly the cost benefit of a CASA delivering Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) to the broader society as a return of \$2.47 for every \$1.00 invested. The calculation was very conservative and excluded the benefits of prevention and systemic work, upon which CASAs have a strong focus.

In respect of the prevention focus of the work with young clients with sexually abusive behaviours (SABTS), the cost of providing this service per client is \$8690. With the focus of the program to prevent future sexual violence and/or gender based violence the cost to society of preventing one sexual assault was estimated by Dubourg at \$25,952.

Reference: *Benefits realisation and break even analysis of services provided by Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) August 2015 (Deloitte Access Economics)*

Strengthening Hospitals Responses to Violence Against Women

CASA Forum has continued to contribute to the development of this work. In 2016, DHHS required public hospitals to build their capacity to respond effectively to family violence and committed resources to The Women's Hospital to develop a toolkit for hospitals. CASA Forum sits on both the network of hospitals which meets bi-monthly to work on strengthening the capacity of hospitals to respond effectively to family violence and the DHHS Project Advisory Group for this work across the state.

Our Watch - Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS)

In 2015 CASA Forum was a member of the RREiS Reference Group to support the Our Watch project with secondary schools to further develop the whole school approach to Respectful Relationships Education. The project involved supporting school leaders and teachers to implement the curriculum, and to look at the school as a workplace and an education institution to promote gender equality and respectful relationships. Working across Victoria, the RREiS project supported 19 schools to embed a whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships Education while also delivering the Department of Education and Training resource, [Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out against Gender-Based Violence](#) to year 8 and year 9 students. Toolkits and templates

were developed and are available to schools.

Our Watch undertook an evaluation of RREiS focusing on its impact on school culture, teachers and students and suggestions for wider roll-out and systematisation. The evaluation report and findings are available on their website. <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/Respectful-relationships-education>

CASA Forum supported the Our Watch submission to the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy.

Royal Commission Project Advisory Group

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse's research project advisory group looked at the Family Dynamics Around Disclosure of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. Members of this advisory group included representatives from Living Well, Cara House, Survivors and Mates

Support Network, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the CASA Forum. The purpose of the project was to explore the outcomes of disclosing experiences of institutional child sexual abuse for survivors and family members.

Establishing the Connection

The Australian Institute of Family Studies, in partnership with UnitingCare ReGen and CASA Forum, undertook research to improve understanding of the complex intersections between alcohol and other drug use and sexual victimisation, and how to build the capacity of the sexual assault and alcohol and other drug sectors to respond more effectively to the needs of individuals with complex needs. The research will identify gaps in knowledge and clinical practice, and inform service responses that are relevant and useful to both sectors. The outcome was a shared sector guide that can be downloaded through this link. <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/establishing-the-connection-guidelines>

Family Violence Steering Committee

Helen Bolton sits on the Family Violence Steering Committee which is made up of victims, Victoria Police, the state government and the state's peak service groups who will review and implement the 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Invitation for Sentencing Advisory Council

In early 2016, CASA Forum was invited by the Sentencing Advisory Council, as part of its research examining family violence, to participate in a consultation on the re-offending patterns of people with prior convictions sentenced for contravening family violence intervention orders and safety notices in 2009 -2010 in the Victorian Magistrates Court.

Victorian Law Reform Commission – Consultation: The role of victims of crime in the criminal trial process.

CASA Forum members were invited to participate in this consultation process. The Commission is due to complete and deliver its report to the Attorney-General by the 1 September 2016. The report will be published after it has been tabled in Parliament.

ANROWS research partnership with Women's Disability Victoria & La Trobe University

CASA Forum is a partner, along with Women with Disabilities Victoria, in an ANROWS research project, "What does it take? Making services accessible to women and young women with disabilities who experience sexual assault and/or domestic violence". Dr. Patsie Frawley from Deakin University, Associate Professor Sue Dyson from La Trobe University, and Dr. Sally Robinson from Southern Cross University are conducting the research.

The research project has included a national survey of managers at sexual assault and/or domestic violence services, and interviews with service-users and staff at three sites across Australia. CASA Forum also provides support for the Research Consultative Group for this project, which consists of a group of women with disabilities who have experience working in violence prevention, and who are helping the researchers.

The research aims to provide "better knowledge about the services available to women and girls with a disability experiencing violence; and evidence to support better services for women with a disability experiencing violence" (ANROWS Website). The project will be completed in February 2017.

More information about the project can be found here: <http://anrows.org.au/what-does-it-take-developing-informed-and-effective-tertiary-responses-violence-and-abuse-for-women>

Australian Institute of Family Studies - Pathways to support services for victim/survivors of child sexual abuse and their families

This project was commissioned to assist in informing the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse of strategies and approaches to enhancing the provision of therapeutic and non-therapeutic support services for people who had an experience of institutional and other extra-familial child sexual abuse. The purpose of the research was to explore how these people (and secondary victims) navigate pathways to relevant and helpful therapeutic and non-therapeutic support services. CASA Forum participated on the reference group and assisted in engaging participants in the research methodology.

Out of Home Care Policy Advisory Group

Towards the end of 2015 The Honourable Sharon Knight, Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services established a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) to consider the development of a sexual health policy for children and young people in out-of-home care. A wide range of community agencies and service providers, including CASA, The Commission for Children and Young People and DHHS representatives were invited to contribute. The Gatehouse Centre represented CASA. A series of PAG meetings were held and resulted in the production of a gap analysis, draft principles for such a policy and a project report.

Supreme Court: Todd (a pseudonym) v The Queen (2016) VSCA 29

The Centre Against Violence received a subpoena to produce a client record and present it to the Magistrate's Court at a committal hearing. In keeping with CASA Forum practice, a consultation with the client was held and she preferred not to have her record produced. Subsequently, CAV engaged a barrister to represent our client in the matter, referring to Section 32 C of the Evidence Act 1958, which references the privilege of confidential communications. Her Honour Judge Sexton determined that the client record would not be required. Subsequently, the defence made an application to the Victorian Supreme Court, Court of Appeal to grant leave to appeal decisions made by Her Honour Judge Sexton in relation to the matter. Health Legal represented CAV as an interested party in the Court of Appeal. Health legal won the case, with the Court holding that the appeal was without substance and refused to grant leave to appeal. The positive implication of the decision is that "...in determining an application to grant leave to issue a subpoena for material containing confidential communications, it is not mandatory for the Judge to inspect the documents in order to determine whether the three limbs in section 32 D(1) of the Act are satisfied. Instead, section 32C (6) operated by granting the Judge a discretion to inspect, which must exercised according to the facts and circumstances of each particular case." (Anne Howard, Health Legal, March 2016 Edition). The outcome is one that strengthens the rights of victim survivors of sexual assault and is welcomed by CASA Forum.

Restorative Justice

For some years CASA Forum has given thought to the place of restorative justice in our work. Carolyn Worth has led our thinking, providing research articles, bringing guest speakers to the forum and encouraging critical debate. In the past year a number of CASA's undertook training in the restorative justice model.

SECASA is involved in a pilot project with the Michael Kirby Centre for Public Health and Human Rights looking at the use of restorative justice sessions for sexual assault and family violence. The project will look at fifty restorative justice sessions and interview all participants.

The aim of the project is to identify how the restorative justice conferencing process and a supportive administration program can deliver a sense of justice and tangible healing for victim/survivors of sexual offending who report to a CASA.

The Centre Against Violence attended with a strong representation of two counsellor advocates and the leaders of the organisation. Since that time a project worker has been appointed to assist CAV to progress the work. Restorative justice is not a form of mediation or counselling and it is not an alternative to the criminal justice system. It is an additional choice for women, children and men to take up and it is designed to strengthen safety, recovery and empowerment. During a restorative justice conference, victims are able to express the impact of sexual assault / family violence. Perpetrators of sexual assault /family violence attend prepared to discuss their thinking, their actions and their insight into the impact of the behaviours. The conference concludes when the

victim has stated what it is she/he would like from the perpetrator and the perpetrator has had an opportunity to offer a response to her/his needs. At CAV community witnesses are recruited, trained

and present during a conference. The presence and participation bring feminist principles to the work by shifting the 'private' to the 'public', the individual problem to the community. By witnessing the violence used by a perpetrator and the harm caused to the victim community witnesses strengthen accountability and support. The work is in its infancy in our specialist settings. Evaluation will be used to inform future developments of the work.

Regional Integrated Family Violence Committees

CASAs are represented across Victoria on the Regional Integrated Family Violence Committees and provide a presence for highlighting the work CASAs do in responding to sexual assault that occurs in a family violence context.

Some CASAs are funded to provide a range of family violence services under their umbrella.

Jo Sheehan-Patterson is Chair of the Mallee Regional Integrated Family Violence Committee.

Carolyn Worth is the Chair of the Southern Melbourne Integrated Family Violence Response Partnership and co-chairs the Integrated Family Violence Executive for Southern Melbourne and Bayside.

CASAs are also represented across the state on Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups (IFVRAG) and various other local family violence steering committees or groups.

Risk Assessment & Management Panels (RAMPS)

Jo Sheehan-Patterson and Kerry Burns chair the RAMPs in their regions (Mallee & Ovens Murray). Carolyn Worth attends the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) in the Southern region. This Panel meets monthly for three hours to look sharing information for high risk situations. RAMPs are not a substitute for existing meetings but provide a forum to enhance agencies response in situations where there is a dangerous level of violence.

Members of RAMP include

- Specialist women's family violence services
- Victoria Police
- Community Corrections
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Alcohol and drug services
- Child FIRST
- Child protection
- Other agencies that may have particular knowledge of a case.

Taskforce 1000

Under the strong leadership of the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, we learned together about how often our system had neglected Aboriginal children's cultural identity, kith and kin. We also examined the neglect of the children's

health and education. Taskforce 1000 required a range of services in Victoria to pay deep consideration to the care provided to Aboriginal children living in out of home care.

Across the state, CASA Forum has been involved with the Taskforce 1000 Area Panels. Over a period of 18 months, each Area Panel closely examined the cases of all Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system. This collaborative project aims to improve outcomes for these children, including supporting family reconciliation and/or community connection, through strategic and systemic change.

Taskforce 1000 continues to work strategically to ensure that Aboriginal children and young people are cared for through the lens of respect and inclusion of their cultural identity.

Aboriginal Children's Panels continue the work operationally. Meeting in local area networks, a range of practitioners meet to consider the needs of individual children. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations host and lead the work with the support of dedicated project staff members.

CASA Forum members participate throughout the State supporting the Taskforce objectives and ensuring that CASA Forum standards of practice are met in the context of each child's care.

K9 Project – Centre Against Violence (CAV - Ovens & Murray district)

In the USA and Canada there is a volume of evidence about the positive therapeutic value of using dogs to support women, children and men who have been sexually assaulted. Dogs are used during counselling sessions and in court settings during trials. Their purpose is to reduce the levels of anxiety experienced by the victim. In partnership with Tessa Stow, K9 trainer, CAV has introduced Coops, the black Labrador, trained to facility dog standards to the CAV team and to some clients. Goulburn Valley CASA are also working with Coops. When Tessa and CAV approached the Magistrate's Court to gain permission to use Coops in the court setting it was not deemed possible initially. The discussion continues and it is now with some hope that we wait further information from Magistrate's Court. We look forward to proceeding to court with Coops and having her help the children, women and men in our care to be at court with the comfort Coops can provide.

Primary Prevention

This year has seen us continue to focus on both promoting and utilising best practice approaches to prevention of violence against women and children, and in particular sexual assault.

There are a variety of programs being delivered by CASAs in both secondary and primary schools enabling valuable working partnerships to be developed with schools. These include the Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPPSS), NCASA's Respectful Relationships Program, Respect Protect Connect, Personal Safety for Primary Schools and Personal Safety Success Training. SECASA has been accredited by the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner to deliver online safety programs in schools. A new workshop has been developed and piloted in schools, designed for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 students.



Restoring Hope

Restoring Hope was established in 2014 to meet a gap in the support of children and young people who have been impacted by sexual abuse.

Restoring Hope raise funds to support CASAs in the work with children, young people and adults. This year Restoring Hope has distributed Care Packs for women and children seen in Crisis Care Units. The care packs are made up of tracksuit, t-shirt, underwear, toiletries, a Hope bear and colouring books which provide both practical and emotional support at a very traumatic time for victims of a recent sexual assault. Restoring Hope also provides other practical support such as mobiles phones, travel cards and art therapy tools for use in counselling and group work. CASA Forum extends a warm and grateful thanks to Kim & her team who works so hard to provide support for children and young people who experience sexual assault.

<http://restoringhope.org.au/>



Joint CASA/Pap Screen Victoria Project

CASA Forum and PapScreen Victoria (PSV) aim to support women who have been sexually assaulted to access cervical screening in a safe and comfortable environment. The project began in 2012 with training for CASA workers from PSV and vice versa.

A survey of counsellor/advocates and Nurse Cervical Screening providers was conducted in 2013 to gain feedback about the use of the information cards for nurses and the flip pads by counsellor/advocates. An indication of the reluctance of counsellor/advocates to give the information to women has led to most CASAs including this information in their info packs and counselling rooms.

The work of the joint CASA/Pap Screen Victoria initiative continued this year looking at ways in which we can maintain a focus on work to ensure this vital health screening for women is continuing to be encouraged by CASA Counsellor/Advocates.

http://www.papscreen.org.au/forwomen/whoshouldhavepaptests/victim_sexual_assault

Dental Survey

A CASA-wide dental survey with clients was conducted in late 2015 to determine what effect sexual assault might have on oral hygiene and self-care for survivors. A summary of key findings is as follows:

- 64 surveys completed on paper and online – 57 from women, 6 from men, 1 from someone who does not identify with the female or male gender
- Numbers of respondents by age range:
 - Under 18 years – 3
 - 18-29 years - 12
 - 35-45 years - 26
 - 46-59 years - 21
 - 60 plus years - 2
- 87% of respondents were sexually assaulted as a child
- 64% were assaulted as an adult
- 45% had been sexually assaulted both as a child and an adult
- 16.6% had only been to the dentist once in the last 4 years
- 37% hadn't been to the dentist for more than 5 years
- 59% said that cost and emotional responses influenced them not to go
- 33% wanted their dentist to know they have a trauma history
- 75% of the women respondents wanted to see a female dentist
- Major themes:
 - Finding a dentist who understands trauma
 - Inattention to self-care – not brushing teeth, not showering or brushing their hair regularly
- Many respondents received negative reactions from their dentist at the state of their teeth – they wanted a dentist who understood why their self-care was not good

A Fact Sheet for people who experience sexual assault and a Resource Sheet for Dentists have been produced for distribution to dentists and CASA clients.

The Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL)

SACL provides after hours telephone crisis counselling support and information throughout Victoria to people who have experienced sexual assault and co-ordinates crisis care responses to people who have been recently assaulted (co-ordinating police and CASA responses in hospitals or MDCs).

SACL received 13,871 calls in the last financial year, in comparison to 12,950 calls in the previous financial year, a steady increase of 921 calls.

SACL coordinated 557 afterhours CCU's for recent survivors of sexual assault in Victoria, as compared to 492 CCU's in the previous financial year, an increase of 64 CCU's overall.

Of these, 94% were female, 5.2% were male, and 0.7% identified as transgender. Most people (73%) accessing a CCU for recent sexual assault were aged between 19-50, with a further 17.5% being children.

Sexual Assault Counselling at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre & Tarrengower Prison.

WestCASA & Loddon-Campaspe CASA continue to provide a counselling service at both the maximum and minimum security women's prisons with staff attending one day per week. Training is also provided to prison staff to understand the issues associated with sexual assault trauma and its disclosure. This program is funded by the Corrections Victoria in the Department of Justice. With increased prison populations both programs are experiencing increased demand for the services. Research shows that the majority of women in prison have a history of trauma experienced both in childhood and as adults. Having access to a therapeutic counselling service gives women an opportunity to engage with a process of healing and recovery. Recently both CASAs have asked to extend the services being provided to women both in prison and when they exit. This expanded service will work with a wider trauma lens than just sexual assault. This is an exciting development that recognises the need for women to be able to access trauma-based services that enables some healing and recovery that can then be supported in the community.

Just in Case Medical Examinations

The Just in Case medical (JIC) examinations continue at SECASA as a pilot site. This provides victims an opportunity to have a forensic medical examination without having to make the immediate decision to report to the police. The forensic evidence is kept for 6 months giving the victim/survivor an opportunity to consider what action they would like to take. There have been 25 presentations so far. We expect the model to be evaluated and all CASAs look forward to being able to provide this option for victims of a recent assault as recognition of the difficulties for some people have in making a decision to report to police.

Regular training of Child Protection staff & Victoria Police SOCIT members

SECASA and Gatehouse Centre continue to partner with the Department of Health and Human Services – Child Protection, to provide training to child protection workers as part of the program: *Working with children and families affected by sexual abuse*. This two-hour session offers Child Protection workers an overview of the CASA service system, to role of CAs and to consider how they engage with children, young people, adults and families who have been impacted by sexual abuse. The ongoing generosity of Aiden, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, in sharing his story as a part of this session, and the impact of this sharing on the understanding of the child protection workers continues to be a central part of this collaborative training.

CASA Forum also deliver specific training about the work of CASAs at the Victorian Police Academy to members training to work in the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT). This training supports the partnership between CASAs and SOCITs in the community and assists with police responses having a victim focus.

CEASE & SABITs

CEASE ANZATSA conducted six workshops for SABTS workers and two advanced practitioner groups this year as part of the CEASE/ANZATSA SABTS Statewide Workforce Development Program.

At the November 2015 ANZATSA Conference two workshops were presented by five members of SECASA's AWARE team and two Counsellors:

- 'Making therapy meaningful – what can you do in the therapy room?' with practical activities and a discussion of the hiccups that can occur in the therapeutic relationship

- ‘Complexity, Diversity, Satisfaction’ – exploring key themes in counselling, advocacy and group work for children, adults and those with a disability.

ANROW Practitioner Engagement Group

CASA Forum was represented on the inaugural Practitioner Engagement Group (PEG), convened by Ms Heather Nancarrow, CEO of Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS). The PEG is comprised of key state based stakeholders (including practitioners) in the family violence and sexual assault fields. We are in an excellent position to contribute practice based knowledge to research and, also to support the translation

EVA Media Action Group

The EVA (Eliminating Violence Against Women) Media Action Group meets bi-monthly and provides a collaborative space among key media specialists and violence against women services to promote consistent messaging in the media aimed at attitudinal change. CASA Forum is represented amongst in this group, along with VicHealth, Office of the Public Advocate, No to Violence, Good Shepherd, Domestic Violence Resource Centre and Women with Disabilities Victoria, and others.

1800RESPECT Implementation Clinical Advisory Group

This committee has met six times. Its purpose was to provide input from experts into the development of a clinical framework and clinical protocols to guide service delivery.

1800RESPECT is now run by Medibank Health Solutions. The Implementation Clinical Advisory Group committee was disbanded after the launch of the new telephone line. A new committee will be formed to oversee on-going service provision.

Older Women’s Rights at Home & in Care

This advisory group meets bi-monthly and has a representative from CASA Forum on it. The group oversees the research being carried out by Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder and Director of Celebrate Aging. The aim of this research is to prevent the sexual assault of older people by documenting, reviewing and improving service responses.

Victorian Forced Marriage Network

The Victorian Forced Marriage Network meets every second month. It has representation from Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Victoria Police, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, Anglicare, Safe Steps, Australian Federal Police and a range of ethnic organisations. Its purpose is to:

- Facilitate information exchange and build knowledge
- Serve as an advocacy group to influence policy, civil and criminal law reform
- Develop more effective services to fill existing gaps to address the needs of victims of forced marriage
- Raise awareness of forced marriage in the community.

Thank you

The members of CASA Forum wish to thank the staff at the Office of Inter-Country Adoption for their generous provision of our monthly CASA Forum meeting room.

My thanks to the members of CASA Forum for their support over the past two years in my role as Convenor and my best wishes to Carolyn Gillespie who takes up the role for the next two years.

Jane Vanderstoel, Convenor

2015 – 2016 Data and service information

CASA Clients by age and gender









