

**NASASV**

National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence



# National Association of Services against Sexual Violence

## Annual Report 2020-2021



## **NASASV Chair Report**

### **The 2020 - 2021 year.**

The National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) works to further the shared aims of services for those who have experienced sexual violence, with the ultimate goal of eliminating sexual violence in the community. The Association understands that:

- Sexual violence is an abuse of power which is most often committed by men against women, children and other men.
- Sexual violence is both a consequence and reinforcement of power disparities between individuals and in society. Attitudes, beliefs, laws and social structures which allow or support the power of one group over another, or which allows or supports violence, contributes to the problem of sexual violence in society.

NASASV is committed to addressing inequalities in society which may perpetuate sexual violence including: gender, race, culture, age, ability, religion, sexuality and class.

Sexual violence includes a range of violent behaviours, including unwanted touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, coerced sexual assault and rape and other physical violence and threat to life.

Sexual violence can have a range of impacts on the individual and society. These can include physical, emotional, economic, social, psychological, legal, health, political and spiritual consequences. The impacts can be compounded by factors such as gender, race, culture, age, religion, ability, sexuality, language and class.

Empowerment of those who have experienced sexual violence is essential to redress the impact of sexual violence.

Services can work towards empowerment by:

- Ensuring that the views of those who have experienced sexual violence are sought and used to influence service provision.
- Promoting the rights of those who have experienced sexual violence through the provision of information, options and choices, and
- Ensuring that decisions about accessing services are in the hands of the person seeking assistance.

Services against sexual violence are committed to the principles of access and equity and aim to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

Sexual violence is a crime against the individual and society. All sectors of the community, including government, should work towards the elimination of sexual violence.



In assisting those who have experienced sexual violence, services will recognise that the mental health impact of sexual violence is a traumatic response and provide services within a trauma specialist framework.

Services provided will be:

- Evidence based and best practice
- Provided within a framework of quality assurance and quality improvement, and
- Be systematically evaluated.

## **The Key objectives of the NASASV**

1. To co-ordinate the sharing of information, skills and resources between services and state and territory networks on all aspects of service provision and co-ordination.
2. To assist governments in developing policies for building safer communities.
3. To lobby and negotiate with Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, government departments and other relevant organisations on issues of common concern to sexual assault service providers and those who are affected by sexual violence.
4. To promote an understanding of sexual violence in the context of gender and power relations.
5. To promote equity of access to services for all those who have experienced sexual violence, recognising that women and children are the predominant group, paying particular attention to those most marginalised on the basis of their race, culture, gender, disability, age, language, sexual orientation and geographic location.
6. To promote community awareness of sexual violence and its personal and social consequences at a state, territory, national and international level and to support and facilitate the community education, community development and primary prevention role of services at a local level.
7. To undertake research relating to service provision for those who have experienced sexual violence.
8. To provide information on training development and resources to services and to promote high quality training and skills development for workers through liaison with relevant national, state and territory training bodies and participation in the development of accredited training.
9. To monitor the range and diversity of service models and promote, through the development of best practice models, the best possible services for survivors.
10. To organise and facilitate national meetings, conferences and seminars.
11. To undertake any other activities necessary to fulfil the purpose of the organisation.



12. To actively seek to engage with newly emerging sexual assault services.

Research tells us, that approximately 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 males experience sexual assault by the time they reach adulthood and that a further 1 in 5 women experience sexual violence after the age of 15.

Sexual assault services respond to the needs of people who have experienced sexual violence in their homes, in public places and institutions, at the hands of family, friends, strangers, and public or authority figures as well as their partners. Approximately 80% of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim, sexual violence often occurs during domestic violence.

Sexual violence is a gross invasion of an individual's human rights and in many cases it is a crime. However, the resultant trauma can result in lost quality of life and life opportunities that contribute to negative consequences and outcomes such as mental illness or substance abuse.

NASASV is focused on the long-term outcomes of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and its role in producing a way forward to respond to and change the values and practices that have led to ongoing sexual abuse and violations of human rights. Sexual Assault Services across Australia have an advocacy role in bringing about this change and the expertise to assist Government and other organisations and institutions to drive this change process through to a more positive future.

### **Some of the activities which NASASV have undertaken during 2020/2021.**

- Membership representation on the Australian, Government of Education, Skills and Employment, Respectful Relationships Reference Panel
- 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.
- 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 consultation.
- 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.
- Consultation with government in relation to the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022 Membership of the National Plan Advisory Group. This consultation involved the provision of specialist expertise to inform the achievement of change and reduce sexual violence, domestic and family violence.

The Department of Social Services funded NASASV in 2020/2021 to review the National Standards of Practice Manual for Services against Sexual Violence (Second Edition) to reflect outcomes in best practice in primary prevention and service provider responses.

NASASV has developed the National Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence (Third Edition). These Standards were developed in consultation and collaboration with the Gendered Violence Research Network, University New South Wales. Consultation was conducted with an Expert Advisory Panel and Services across the nation.

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.

It is with pleasure that I submit this Annual Report. I would like to thank the members of the Association and the members of the NASASV Board, and the Executive for their contribution to the organisation over the past year.

Joanne Sheehan-Paterson OAM  
Chair – NASASV  
November 2021.



## ACT

The ACT has had a challenging year in terms of the problems impacting the world. 2021 became the year where there was greater focus on the issue of sexual violence beginning with the explosion of sexual assault amongst those who work in Parliament. A young woman's story of sexual assault in her workplace dominated media and sexual assault was in the media daily. There was significant outcry from politicians and the community alike coupled with community action to speak out against the continuing impacts of sexual violence.

There were many accusations against people in positions of power but very little recourse or accountability, as is often the case with sexual assault. 2021 was also the year that a survivor of child sexual assault was Australian of the year when Grace Tame spoke publicly about her story of sexual assault. In response to this focus, the ACT Government relooked at this issue and announced a tripartisan commitment to a more effective response to sexual violence in all its forms. The areas of focus included Prevention, Response, Law Reform, Workplaces, the Aboriginal Consultative Group and LGBTI Committee. This work is crucial for the ACT due to the fact that the issue of sexual violence has not received enough support over the past decade. Without the focus from government the structures in place to support those impacted by sexual assault have been very shaken.

The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) is the only dedicated service of its kind in the ACT. It is born from strong feminist roots and remains an important part of the sexual assault response in the ACT. Each year there is greater demand on the services provided by our Centre, and the difficulty is compounded when the world is struggling through the trauma of a pandemic. Each year our services are under tremendous pressure to continue to achieve positive outcomes for clients, and the investment Staff make in achieving the impossible is always amazing.

This year we also saw the redevelopment of the Standards of Practice for Services Against Sexual Violence. This project was funded by DSS and is a great achievement for Sexual Assault Services across Australia. It is by far the best contribution NASASV has made to the field of trauma in some years. We are grateful to the University of NSW for their collaboration and commitment to the project.

Chrystina Stanford

CEO

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre



## Victoria



### SAS VIC (Formerly CASA Forum) - Vision, Mission and Philosophy

#### Vision

A world free of sexual assault.

#### Mission

SAS VIC brings together the collective expertise of the Victorian Sexual Assault services to lead and inform policy, practice and research.

#### Philosophy

SAS VIC is committed to addressing the inequalities within society which result in the perpetration of sexual violence and family violence against women, children and men.

All sexual assault services 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. Our work is informed by an intersectional lens that recognises the cultural context of victim/survivors including indigenous status, race, ethnicity, religious and spiritual beliefs, language as well as other individual factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity, age and ability. These factors can interact to create intersecting forms of discrimination that can increase the risk of sexual assault.

All Victorian sexual assault services maintain accreditation against the DHHS Human Services Standards which ensure compliance in four key areas: Empowerment, Access & Engagement, Wellbeing and Participation.

SAS VIC is the peak body of 15 Victorian sexual assault services and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line. Together, these organisations 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 professionals
- Informing government policy
- Advocating for law reform
- Providing submissions and data to government Inquiries
- Facilitating research to increase community understanding of the nature and incidence of sexual assault.





## Highlights and Achievements

The last year has been one of transformative change for the peak body for sexual assault services in Victoria. Formerly CASA Forum, SAS Victoria is now the peak body for all Victorian government funded sexual assault and harmful sexual behaviours services across Victoria.

Since joining forces in early 2020, the sector has invested time and energy to undertake foundational work to strengthen the peak to drive change and shape responses to sexual assault in Victoria.

SAS VIC has incorporated as an organisation, formalised governance arrangements, elected a new Board, and undertaken a rebranding exercise that led to our new name and identity as Sexual Assault Services Victoria. We also developed a new website for the peak.

SAS VIC affirmed key directions for the next few years, and lobbied government for resources to ensure this work can happen. Through advocacy, SAS VIC built awareness and ensured greater attention is now being paid to sexual assault in policy, planning and budgeting. Sexual assault is now included in the Victorian Government Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020-2023, and SAS VIC is actively working with the government to develop a comprehensive Sexual Assault Strategy as part of the Plan. In recognition of the need for us to contribute to this work, SAS Victoria received funding to employ our inaugural CEO, Kathleen Maltzahn who commenced in July 2021.

SAS VIC also received funding from Family Safety Victoria to strengthen the capacity of the sector, improve collaborative approaches between sexual assault and family violence services, and bring our expertise to assist and inform the development of the Strategy over the coming years.

In the middle of this process of reorientation and renewal, our members were also grappling with the impact of COVID on services and services users. Much creativity, innovation and resilience was evident as member services adapted to providing online services as well as face to face critical care. Newly created approaches to best meet the requirements of those who had been sexually assaulted were created and shared between services.

Requests for sexual assault services continued to grow during the pandemic, and all services continued to meet this increased demand despite COVID limitations.

## Submissions

Victorian Law Reform Commission: Improving the Response of the Justice System to Sexual Offences December, 2020

Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs July 2020

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children July 2021





## Family Violence Related Projects

SAS VIC continued to employ two project workers to support Victorian sexual assault services to align with the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework introduced as part of major reforms to the family violence system. A key activity this year has been the development of a webinar series in collaboration with No To Violence and DV VIC/DVRC on undertaking MARAM and Trauma and Violence-informed Practice in the context of Intimate Partner Violence.

Work also continues in relation to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendation to facilitate collaboration between sexual assault and family violence services. The next step in this work is the development of a shared trauma framework which will guide the practice intersections of the two sectors.

## Aboriginal Specific Sexual Assault Service

Three pilot Aboriginal specific Sexual Assault Healing Services have been funded by the Victorian Government – one in inner Melbourne, one in outer Melbourne and one in regional Victoria. The regional sexual assault services in each of these areas is working with these Healing Services, sharing our mainstream approaches to supporting victim survivors as well learning from them about healing approaches that are relevant to victim survivors from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Author/Compiler  
**HEATHER CLARKE**  
MANAGER,  
NORTHERN CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT



## QUEENSLAND

### Overview

Queensland Sexual Assault Counselling and Support Services are provided primarily by Non-Government not-for-profit organisations across the State. Funding responsibility for adult services (12 years and over) sits with the Department of Justice and Attorney General whereas services provided to Children, Young People and Families are funded by Child Safety, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN) is the Peak body and has over 23 member services across Queensland.

### Highlights and Achievements

- QSAN became incorporated and held our first AGM in November 2020.
- For the past 3 years QSAN advocated for funding to enable QSAN to better support and represent all member services – in October 2021 QSAN was offered a 12 month contract.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

All services work closely with Queensland Police Service (QPS), Health and other Government and non-government agencies. Over the past few years, there have been many trials and evaluations occurring including;

- 24 hour co-ordinated response trial in Townsville (Sexual Assault Response Team – SART), partnering with Qld Health and QPS. This trial was highlighted as best practice and has been funded ongoing.
- The Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Initiative is in the final stages of trial and evaluation. This initiative provided funding across several regions in Queensland (Cairns, Rockhampton, Gladstone, South Burnett, Moreton Bay and Toowoomba) and includes specialist programs for children, families and adults impacted by sexual violence and for young people engaging in harmful sexual behaviour.
- QPS implemented a new model appointing Sexual Violence Liaison Officers across the State.

### Directorate Issues

- Queensland Sexual Assault Services continue to raise with our State Government the urgent need for increases to our core funding. Despite significant increases in demand and the enormous population growth in Queensland, there has been no increase in core funding since 1996. The Government has informed QSAN that a review will be conducted early 2022 projected to take at least six months.
- QSAN continues to call for the roll out across the state of co-ordinated sexual assault response teams (Townsville model).

Karren Aspinall – Chairperson QSAN Incorporated  
Executive Director – Laurel Place Inc.



## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Overview**

Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service is the only specialist sexual assault service in South Australia. It is a service within the Youth and Women's Safety and Wellbeing Division (YWSWD) of the Women's and Children's Health Network. Yarrow Place provides direct clinical services (medical, forensic and counselling) to people subjected to sexual assault as well as community capacity building to respond to sexual assault through the lead agency training program.

Yarrow Place now has two youth services, both of which are assertive outreach models, targeting young people under Guardianship of the Chief Executive (or post Guardianship) for young people aged 12 -25. The Intensive Therapeutic Care Program (ITCP) works with this group of young people who are identified as at risk of sexual exploitation and / or have frequent absconding behaviours. The My Place program is a new service within Yarrow Place and works with young people who are pregnant or are identified as at risk of early pregnancy, which is likely to result in removal of the infant in to the care system.

### **Highlights and Achievements**

From July 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 the following services were provided by Yarrow Place:

- The My Place program, implemented in August 2020, now has 12 consumers engaged with the program.
- 673 counselling requests were received in the adult service, with 3756 counselling appointments provided over this time period. Due to COVID restrictions, greater flexibility in counselling was offered with an increased use of Telehealth and phone counselling, though it was noted that consumers demonstrated a preference for face-to-face counselling where possible.
- Whereas previously all consumers were seen within a six week time period from the time of request, this was not achievable over the last 12 month period due to the increase in requests.
- A total of 532 Forensics Medical Examinations, Just In Case forensics and health checks were provided by Yarrow Place between July 2020 and June 2021, an increase from 501 in the financial year prior.
- The Youth and Women's Safety and Wellbeing Division facilitated a total of 159 training and community capacity building sessions across metropolitan and country South Australia, with 2380 participants. A range of training packages have been facilitated including Recognise and Respond to Rape and Sexual Assault training and Looking Beyond Behaviour – a training package developed to increase awareness in working with young people who have experienced trauma and are at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Outreach services have also been established in 2020 and were increased in to this financial year with additional services being offered in both the southern and northern regions.
- All staff have undertaken Connecting with People Suicide Risk Assessment training over this period to ensure a consistent and evidence based approach to identifying and managing risk.
- The Consumer Engagement Committee within the YWSWD continues to undertake a range of projects and ongoing work – including: presenting at training, participating in



safety quality meetings, providing feedback in to new policies or procedures and being panel members on recruitment panels.

### **Partnerships and Collaborations**

Yarrow Place has continued to engage in strong partnerships with key agencies including South Australia Police (SAPOL), Department for Child Protection, Office for Women and the Attorney Generals Department. Additionally, strong partnerships have been formed through the ongoing work undertaken with Embolden – the peak body for domestic and sexual violence in South Australia.

Additionally, SA Health has now introduced domestic and sexual violence Executive Leads in each local health network and country / regional health location. The purpose of these Leads is to enhance understanding, service delivery and capacity building in screening and responding to domestic and sexual violence across SA Health.

### **Directorate Issues**

- Work continues to be undertaken with Women's Health Service as it transitions to a domestic violence specialist service providing services to all genders. This service will be renamed and branded to ensure greater inclusivity in domestic violence injury documentation, health care and counselling responses for those experiencing domestic and family violence.
- COVID 19 restrictions have continued to have ongoing impact on service delivery and demands for counselling and support.

Katrina Dee – Director – Youth and Women's Safety and Wellbeing Division

Sarah Cooper – Manager , Yarrow Place



## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Overview

The Department of Health Western Australia is the main funding body for sexual assault services in Western Australia. In the metropolitan area, the Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC (Perth)) provides health and forensic services and counselling support to people 13 years and over who have been sexually assaulted within the previous 14 days as well as counselling services for past sexual assault and/or abuse. SARC offers a state-wide education and training program to the community, schools, and other health professionals. Throughout Western Australia, the Department of Health funds five community-based sexual assault support services located in Peel (Mandurah), South West (Bunbury), Goldfields (Kalgoorlie), Mid-West (Geraldton), and Pilbara (Port Hedland). Each of these services provides region specific service responses.

### Highlights and Achievements

#### Development of the Centre for Women's Safety & Wellbeing

In December 2020 the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services merged with the Women's Community Health Network WA to form the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing. The Centre has incorporated a focus on sexual violence into its service model. The peak body represents women and children impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence in Western Australia and is the representative body of domestic and family violence services, and community-based sexual assault and women's health services. Sexual violence across the life course and across the spectrum will be a strong focus of the Centre in 2022. The Centre is seeking to develop state and national partnerships in this area to maximise effort and impact.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

#### New Therapeutic Refuge

November 2020 saw the opening of Warlang Bidi, the first therapeutic refuge in Western Australia. Managed by OVIS, with Allambee as the therapeutic partner, the Warlang Bidi Refuge provides accommodation and therapeutic services for women, and their children, who are victims of family and domestic violence with co-occurring mental health or alcohol and drug needs. Warlang Bidi has been supporting women and children for almost 12 months now and is about to see its capacity doubled by the opening of a further six units.

### Special Projects

#### Spotlight on Sexual Violence Report and forum

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing led the Spotlight on Sexual Violence project. Through this project, Dr Alison Evans produced the *Spotlight on Sexual Violence in Western Australia* report which was launched on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2020. This report contained a number of key recommendations to the State Government on priority actions for sexual violence response and prevention and was instrumental to the State Governments decision to develop WA's inaugural Sexual Violence Strategy.

A 'Spotlight on Sexual Violence' Forum hosted as part of the Report launch brought together a diversity of stakeholders across the government, non-government and private sectors and



included speakers such as Professor Donna Chung and (the now Greens Senator) Dorinda Cox.

### Sexual Violence Strategy

The State Government has recently commenced work on the development of Western Australia's first Sexual Violence Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to recognise sexual violence as a distinct form of violence and to address sexual violence in a coordinated and holistic way. The strategy will focus on prevention, service responses, short and long-term outcomes for victims-survivors, and perpetrator accountability. The strategy will provide the framework for sexual violence service and program provision in WA. Allambee CEO, Nicci Lambert will Chair the Reference Group for the Strategy.

### Family, Domestic & Sexual Violence Conference: Bringing Children & Young People into View:

This Conference was a partnership between the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing and Stopping Family Violence. It was agreed by the convenors that a stronger focus on sexual violence at this year's conference was necessary. We heard from wonderful presenters such as Maree Crabb who focused on pornography, young people and violence prevention. Nicole Lambert focused on navigating consent in the context of young relationships?

### **Directorate Issues**

#### Insufficient Resourcing of the Sector:

Resourcing of the sector is insufficient to meet service demand. Annual funding levels of sexual assault support services have been insufficient to meet service demand for several years. In addition to the impact of COVID, the increased and very public focus on sexual violence and sexual harassment at both state and national levels. The increased media focus on family, domestic, and sexual violence surrounding the National Summit on Women's Safety, the development of the next National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children and the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, the WA [Parliamentary Inquiry into Sexual Harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry](#) and the announcement of Western Australia's first Sexual Violence Strategy has significantly increased numbers of people seeking specialist support. Of further concern is that in addition to increased demand, the level of severity and complexity of needs has continued to increase. The sector is strongly advocating for resourcing of services to be reviewed.

#### Service Recommissioning:

As a result of significant advocacy from the State funded children's sexual abuse services, the Department of Communities has commenced a recommissioning process for these services which will review service designs, expected outcomes, reporting processes and funding levels. This process is being undertaken by the Royal Commission Implementation Team within Communities and will be informed by the recommendations from the Royal Commission.

#### Development of the new Office for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence

In consultations on the development of this new Office, the Department of Communities discussed incorporating a stronger focus on sexual violence as a tactic of family and domestic violence. In its submission to this consultation, the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing argued that intimate partner sexual violence is a significant indicator of escalating frequency and severity of domestic violence and warrants a dedicated focus in the new





Office. Studies of IPSV show higher incidences of threats to kill an intimate partner than in other abusive relationships. IPSV also puts someone at a much higher risk of being killed, particularly if they are also being physically assaulted.

DFV and sexual assault services and responses are often separate and underpinned by different funding models, mandates, goals and practice frameworks. As IPSV victims/survivors present with intersecting issues and diverse needs, both types of services report IPSV as a particularly challenging issue which increases the complexity of providing appropriate service responses.

Studies have shown a lack of attention to IPSV in both DFV and sexual assault services, with some workers in DFV and sexual assault services feeling that IPSV is more compatible with the work of those in the other field. Consequently, women experiencing IPSV are often not accessing the most appropriate support to enhance their safety, wellbeing and recovery. Ideally, the new Office would work with sector partners to lead cross-sector co-ordination that supports specialist responses to the specific contexts of IPSV and the practice strategies required to help professionals support their clients.

## **Active Memberships of NASAV/Contributing Agencies**

Allambee Counselling Inc  
Centre for Women's Safety & Wellbeing  
Dessert Blue Connect  
Waratah Support Service  
Pheonix Advocacy & Support Service

## **Report Compiled By:**

Nicole Lambert, CEO, Allambee  
Dr Alison Evans, Director Family, Domestic & Sexual Violence, Centre for Women's Safety & Wellbeing





## New South Wales

### Overview

*2020 has seen little change in the capacity of sexual assault services to respond to client demand in NSW. Demand for services in interfamilial sexual assault has increased. The general level of distress across the state resulting from drought, bushfires, flood and then COVID-19 have adversely impacted on those experiencing complex trauma leading to a considerable increase in demand from increasingly distressed clients. It is expected that all states and territories would be experiencing the same.*

*Law reform in relation to offence of concealment has been achieved. In sexual assault and domestic violence matters a defence for not reporting is that the person is over 18 years and did not want the matter reported. As of 30 June 2020, review of sexual consent laws and inclusion of coercive control in domestic violence laws were in train.*

*The Royal Commission directed changes in relation to tendency and coincidence have been implemented but only in relation to child sexual assault matters. Changes have also been made to the Mental Health Act 2007 (NSW). Previously where the defendant was able to prove mental incapacity the finding was 'not guilty by reason of mental illness.' This has now been changed to 'act proven but not criminally responsible.' Police have engaged in promoting sexual consent and are working on a bystander promotion. Local Councils are stepping into primary prevention and are setting up committees and projects. Corporates in relation to sexual harassment and tertiary institutions in relation to sexual assault are increasingly initiating and sponsoring projects and/or working to improve workplace prevention and response.*

### Highlights and Achievements

Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (now trading as Full Stop Australia) engaged in a wide range of law reform activities during 2020-2021. Including writing submissions to inquiries, sitting on stakeholder advisory groups and advocating for our client's interests to government. Submissions included but were not limited to the following:

- Submission to the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 - 21 August 2020
- Submission to the NSW Law Reform Commission on Consultation Paper 22: Open Justice: Court and tribunal information: access, disclosure, and publication - 18 February 2021
- Submission to NSW Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control - 28 January 2021



## Service Delivery:

- Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (RDVSA now Full Stop Australia) delivered 16,195 occasions of service to 3,984 individual clients via phone, online and video counselling and face to face sessions.
- During the COVID-19 lockdowns, RDVSA was able to ensure uninterrupted 24/7 service delivery. The Counselling Team were redeployed remotely and adopted the use of new technologies such as video counselling.
- The Counselling Team supported an initial review of the impact of COVID on people experiencing sexual, domestic, and family violence through funding from the Mental Health Commission. The final research findings will be released later in 2022.
- The Training Team also adapted to COVID-19 restrictions and delivered sessions both face to face and remotely to over 3,000 individuals for the 2020-21 period.

## Partnerships and Collaborations

- FSA worked closely with our colleagues in the sector, including the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) and the NSW Women's Alliance (of which FSA is co-chair) to advocate for crucial reforms for women and children, including coercive control. Consent in sexual offences, victims' rights and law relating to mental health and cognitive impairments.
- FSA is a member of the Women's Health NSW Managers network. We deliver community-based counselling services (CBCS) for women who experienced childhood sexual assault. Each year around 70 women receive medium to long-term trauma specialist counselling at Women's Health Care Centres at six locations across NSW.
- FSA was asked to join the panel that is advising the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR) Advisory Group.
- NSW Ministry of Health continues to fund the NSW Rape Crisis 24/7 (Now NSW Sexual Violence Helpline) Phone and Online Counselling for access to specialist trauma counselling and support for people in NSW who have experienced sexual violence.
- Department of Social Services (DSS) funds Sexual Assault Counselling Australia (now National Sexual Abuse and Redress Support Service) which offers access to specialist trauma counselling support through 24/7 Phone and Online Counselling for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse to engage with the National Redress Scheme. This includes working with inmates in NSW prisons men who experienced child sexual in institutions.
- City of Sydney funded to deliver our Breaking Barriers transition to telephone counselling in response to COVID-19 to upskills mental health workers in Telehealth service delivery.
- NSW Women's Alliance - Advocacy collaboration
- NSW DCJ DFV Interagency Meeting Informing NSW funding and reform agenda

## NSW/ACT Redress Support Services Meeting

- Network/ referral pathway meetings with Southwest Local Health Districts (IPARVAN)
- Training with North Sydney Local Health District- Forensic Services
- Network/ Meetings with Knowmore legal service
- Victim Services Interagency
- City of Sydney Interagency



## **Networking activities with National Redress Scheme providers.**

- Policy and procedure reviews/ updates across counselling services.
- Transitioning the management of service delivery for Professional Services and Training into the clinical team.
- Continuing to work in the clinical space, actively reviewing and developing therapeutic plans.
- Worked on collating evidence for QIP, eg developing and reviewing procedure manuals

## **Special Projects**

- National Mental Health Commission Project to explore the impact of COVID-19 on services supporting priority clients such as those experiencing sexual and domestic violence.
- NSW Women's Alliance of which we are a member put Nine-Point Plan addressing sexual violence in NSW to State Government.
- National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children and LGBTQA+ People- CEO attended consultations workshops, NP Advisory Group.
- NSW Women's Health Managers - Promotion of referral pathways and collaborations in advocacy to improve access for women affected by sexual, domestic and family violence.
- FSA was represented National Summit on Women's Safety, and continue to have input through National Plan Advisory Group
- National Plan Advisory Group and Workshop participation:
  - Role of Workplaces,
  - Coercive control (observer),
  - LGBTQA+ (observer),
  - Justice Responses,
  - Children and Young People (observer),
  - Service Design and Delivery,
  - Policing and Law Enforcement (observer)

## **Directorate Issues**

- As identified above, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns have had a substantial impact on our clients and the way we deliver our service. FSA staff were re-deployed remotely, and were able to continue service uninterrupted using video technology.
- NMHC and FSA commenced a review of the impact of COVID on people experiencing sexual, domestic and family violence.
- Initial finding from the review (during the COVID lockdowns) show that counsellors observed an increase of 80% in isolation and in complexity of presenting issues.

**Report Compiled By:** Hayley Foster, CEO Full Stop Australia