

# Aware

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

## *In this issue*

### **It's "in our hands" to stop violence against women**

Welcome to the fourth edition of *ACSSA Aware*. The previous edition of this newsletter took as its theme "women's rights as human rights", following the *16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women* campaign. In this edition, we continue the theme of human rights, looking at Amnesty International's recently launched *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign.

In the previous edition, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja noted the ongoing difficulty in translating the issue of violence against women "from a private political concern to a public issue of debate, and then to a public issue that receives a response and action". Nowhere has this difficulty been more apparent than in the field of international human rights, where a traditional focus on state violence has all but ignored the most widespread human rights abuse in the world – that of violence against women in the family. Amnesty's six-year campaign marks the culmination of the organisation's own long journey to broaden the scope of its work on human rights to include abuses perpetrated in the so-called "private sphere".

The feature article in this edition, "Making Rights a Reality", examines how such conceptual changes to human rights may mark the beginning of a new era of activism of greatly increased relevance to women, and looks at what the Amnesty campaign means in terms of raising awareness and promoting better responses to sexual assault in Australia.

Also in this edition, there is a review of a recently-published report by Patricia Hayes on behalf of Working Against Sexual Harassment (WASH), entitled "Taking It Seriously: Contemporary Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace". The key findings of the report are outlined, and details of how to obtain copies are provided.

We also look at how some members of the community have organised their response to the recent series of sexual assault allegations involving footballers. "Football Fans Against Sexual Assault" (FFASA) have launched a web-based campaign aimed at providing a vision for football codes on promoting respectful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women.

Our service profile this time is of *SideStreet*, an Adelaide-based counselling service working with young women and men aged 12 to 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and who have experienced sexual and/or physical abuse. We also profile one of the new additions to our Good Practice Database – this time the "Sexual Violence Services Tampon Card", produced by Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service in collaboration with *De Jour*.

There are also *ACSSA Aware's* regular updates on conferences, literature highlights from recent additions to ACSSA's library collection at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and a new section on training services.

As always, the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is keen to receive feedback on how we can better meet the needs of those committed to working against sexual assault, so please continue to provide us with your comments on current or future publications. If you would like to contribute an article or review to the *ACSSA Aware* newsletter, refer to the details of how to do so on the inside back cover. If this is the first issue of *Aware* you've read, earlier editions can be requested via email or by returning the form on the back page. Don't forget, all our publications are available online at [www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/).



Australian Government

Australian Institute  
of Family Studies

Australian Centre for the  
Study of Sexual Assault

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault aims to improve access to current information on sexual assault in order to assist policy makers and others interested in this area to develop evidence-based strategies to prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is funded by the Office of the Status of Women, through the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault. The Centre is hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

# Taking sexual harassment

**T**aking It Seriously: Contemporary Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, by Patricia Hayes for Working Against Sexual Harassment (WASH) presents findings from a survey conducted in 2003 of more than 200 people into their experiences of workplace sexual harassment since 1999. It also provides a synopsis of ten case studies developed from face-to-face interviews that provide insights into the stories of women and men who have been sexually harassed in a Victorian workplace, but who did not report to any state or federal commission (the “unreported”).

In addition to participants’ experiences of sexual harassment, the report explores the impact sexual harassment had on their lives, what affected the decisions they made, and workplace responses. The WASH report aims to raise awareness of the issue of sexual harassment in the community and highlight that even 20 years after legislation aimed at dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace was introduced, little has changed for a considerable number of workers who have had such experiences.

The WASH survey documented people’s experiences of sexual harassment across many industries and occupations. Factors contributing to women’s vulnerability to all forms of harassment in the workplace include casualisation of the workforce, limited access of casual workers to industrial processes, and inactive, ineffective or non-existent workplace policies on sexual harassment.

Key findings presented in the report include:

- 75 per cent of respondents experienced/witnessed sexual comment, jokes or innuendo and 57 per cent experienced/witnessed uninvited physical contact or gestures;
- 50 per cent of respondents reported suffering emotionally as a result of the sexual harassment experience;
- 37 per cent of respondents reported, at some level, instances of sexual harassment that they had themselves witnessed or experienced;
- 31 per cent left their jobs as a result of the sexual harassment while clear consequences for the harasser were infrequent; and
- 5 per cent of respondents reported using the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

The ten case studies detailed in the report capture the unique experiences of women and men who have been sexually harassed in a Victorian workplace and illustrate that even though each experience is unique, common generalities and themes of sexual harassment experiences are evident in their stories: ►

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ACSSA Manager: *Melanie Heenan*

Australian Institute of Family Studies  
300 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000 Australia  
Phone: (03) 9214 7888 Fax: (03) 9214 7839  
Internet: [www.aifs.gov.au/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/)

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# seriously

The recently published Working Against Sexual Harassment (WASH) report into workplace sexual harassment provides an insight into the experiences of women and men who have witnessed or experienced such harassment in a Victorian workplace.

- Participants felt unsupported by the wider community, legal structures and their employers, and they also felt blamed and silenced by the responses they received to sexual harassment.
- Participants felt that there were few consequences for the employer or the harasser while they reported long-term physical, psychological, social or financial impacts.
- Many participants were unaware of their rights in relation to sexual harassment or where to find accessible and affordable assistance and advocacy.
- The responses provided by participants indicate that sexual harassment, like many other forms of sexual violence against women, is normalised and tolerated within the workplace and the wider community.
- Many workplaces did not have a sexual harassment policy and where one did exist, in-house procedures were often ineffective in stopping harassment, deterring and penalising the harasser or supporting the victim/survivor.
- Factors such as fear of being disbelieved, victimisation after reporting, confidentiality not being upheld, fear of job security and the actual harassers being the supervisor presented barriers to participants making a complaint either at a workplace or commission level.
- Many participants were unaware of the existence of the Equal Opportunity Commission or Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or unfamiliar with their functions and feared putting themselves through a process where they

## REVIEWED BY JENNIE CHILD

*Taking It Seriously: Contemporary Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, by Patricia Hayes, Research Project Worker, Working Against Sexual Harassment (WASH).

might have to face the harasser again or where they might be put on trial.

The report provides recommendations for preventing future sexual harassment and improving support available for those who experience workplace sexual harassment. These recommendations take into account the responses provided in the case studies which indicate that participants felt that individuals, government, the community and employers all have a responsibility to prevent sexual harassment.

The report provides recommendations for employers, government and the community in relation to legislative reform, systematic and independent monitoring of workplaces and complaints, community-wide action, training and education, workplace training and support, and trade union initiatives. It provides recommendations in the area of law reform, including moving from a system of relying on individual complaints and reporting, to one of compliance, including individual monitoring of workplaces. It is also recommended by WASH that existing sexual harassment protection and justice processes require reform and assert that the government should extend the powers of the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to ensure these reforms. ▶

## ACSSA Alert email service

ACSSA Alert is an email news service offered by the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. Members of ACSSA Alert receive regular emails with updates and announcements about ACSSA, the ACSSA website, and general news from the sexual assault field.

ACSSA Alert messages contain notices of forthcoming conferences and events, new reports, training opportunities, new material available in the Australian

Institute of Family Studies library, and links to all ACSSA publications as they are released.

To join the ACSSA Alert service send an email to: [majordomo@aifs.gov.au](mailto:majordomo@aifs.gov.au) with "subscribe acssa-alert" as the message, leaving the subject line blank.

Contributions to ACSSA Alert or the website are welcome – please email [acssa@aifs.gov.au](mailto:acssa@aifs.gov.au)

Despite legislation introduced by the Commonwealth 20 years ago to deal with sexual harassment, the reflections provided by participants indicate that little has changed. Consequently, the report urges government, employers and the community to take workplace sexual harassment seriously.

The WASH report provides a valuable resource for those seeking information on people's experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace and is intended to be used as a resource by government, employer groups, community groups, researchers, students and activists alike to work for social change and to reduce workplace sexual harassment.

The full WASH report *Taking It Seriously: Contemporary Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* can be downloaded from the CASA House website at [www.rwh.org.au/casa/](http://www.rwh.org.au/casa/)

Since the WASH report was published, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has released two further publications that provide information in relation to workplace sexual harassment.

The first publication, entitled *20 Years On: The Challenges Continue: Sexual Harassment in the Australian Workplace*, reports the findings of the first comprehensive national survey undertaken in Australia of the incidence and nature of sexual harassment. This was a national telephone survey of sexual harassment that documented the responses of more than 1000 randomly selected interviewees from the Australian adult population.

A key finding of the survey was that 18 per cent of survey participants stated they had personally experienced workplace sexual harassment at some time (28 per cent of women and 7 per cent of men). Other important findings relate to: the incidence of sexual harassment in the community; the nature of sexual harassment in the workplace; characteristics of the target of sexual harassment, the harasser, and of the workplace; and reasons for not reporting.

The second publication *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Code of Practice for Employers* updates and revises the earlier *Sexual Harassment: A Code of Practice*, developed in 1996. "The Code" provides guidelines for employers for avoiding sexual harassment in the workplace and incorporates mandatory requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act, accepted practice in the area, and established case law.

Both publications provide extremely useful resources for those wanting information on the incidence and nature of sexual harassment in Australia and guidelines and initiatives aimed at preventing and appropriately responding to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Both these publications can be downloaded from the Commission's website at [www.hreoc.gov.au/](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/).

**Jennie Child** is a Project Officer at the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

## Community response to allegations against footballers

### "Football Fans Against Sexual Assault"

Since the beginning of this year, there has been a series of highly publicised sexual assault allegations involving National Rugby League (NRL) and Australian Football League (AFL) players.

These include sexual assault allegations against two NRL *Melbourne Storm* players, gang-rape allegations against members of the NRL *Canterbury Bulldogs* team, and sexual assault allegations against two members of the AFL's *St Kilda* team. In each case, the allegations were the subject of police investigations but did not proceed further due to "insufficient evidence". In addition to these allegations, other women have come forward to allege sexual assault by NRL and AFL players. To date, no case involving sexual assault allegations against NRL or AFL players has been brought to trial.

*Football Fans Against Sexual Assault* (FFASA) is one community response to the recent series of sexual assault allegations involving footballers. FFASA is a group of grassroots footy fans

disillusioned by the response to sexual assault allegations by both codes. FFASA has launched a web-based campaign aimed at providing a vision for the NRL and AFL on promoting respectful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women.

The FFASA website provides:

- information on proposals developed by FFASA for the NRL and AFL aimed at promoting cultural change;
- an opportunity to sign the FFASA campaign petition to express your opposition to sexual violence against women and club cover-ups;
- statistics on sexual assault; and
- copies of FFASA newsletters and media releases.

For further information on *Football Fans Against Sexual Assault*, or to sign the campaign petition, visit the FFASA website at [www.ffasa.org/](http://www.ffasa.org/)

# Making rights a reality

## The human rights approach to stopping violence against women

**“Violence against women is a human rights scandal of unparalleled dimension; it is a cultural, social and political malignancy rooted in prejudice, bigotry and discrimination whose eradication must be sought without reservation, without equivocation, and without delay.” – Kate Gilmore (2004).**

LARA FERGUS

Although the ability of the human rights framework to adequately address violence against women is sometimes questioned, few activists and service providers working in the field of sexual assault would contradict the statement above by Kate Gilmore, the Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International, in her address to the Australian launch of the *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign, in Canberra on 8 March 2004.

The human rights framework draws upon the language of international human rights law and instruments, such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations 1948), and a wider theoretical base, to understand and address a range of abuses. Traditional interpretations of human rights have tended to focus on civil and political rights, and overlook most violence against women, such as sexual assault, particularly when it takes place in the so-called “private sphere”.

This article examines some of the historic and contemporary debates surrounding women’s human rights. Women’s rights activists have effectively challenged and expanded traditional interpretations of human rights, which has affected the development of Amnesty International’s own approach to the human rights of women. The development of this approach from its beginnings to the recently-launched *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign is briefly traced in this article. One of the basic tenets, and great strengths, of the campaign is the “due diligence approach”, by which governments and other authorities are held responsible for upholding women’s human rights. The last section of this article specifically examines the applications of the due diligence approach to sexual assault.

### Making women’s rights human rights

Human rights law, many feminist critics have argued, was not constructed with a view to promoting gender equality, but rather to protect men from what they feared most: the power of the state (Binion 1995). The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations 1948) was largely influenced by earlier documents outlining the “rights of man” or the “rights of the citizen”, such as those which emerged from the French Revolution of 1789. Such documents were never intended to apply to women, and at least one early feminist activist, Olympe de Gouges, was guillotined for suggesting that they should be (Gay Levy et al. 1979).

While the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* translated and updated these earlier documents into “gender neutral” language, it still largely reflects the concerns of elite men. This is not to say that such concerns are never shared by women or non-elite men, just that women and non-elite men face additional concerns that are not addressed in the Declaration. Such concerns are the result of structural inequalities that the Declaration does not analyse, such as those based on sex discrimination or resulting from colonisation. Thus the image of the “human rights box” has emerged in recent theory, defined as “a set of historical and structural circumstances that enables the human rights framework to gain currency among elites while limiting advances, and even creating setbacks, among the general population” (Bauer 2000: 1).

Judith Bessant and Sandy Cook (1998: 10) are particularly critical of international human rights law, arguing that: “The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966):

- fail to recognise many forms of violence as violence, and are unable to address those forms of endemic violence against women;
- operate with a masculinist distinction between public and private spheres;
- assume universalising principles that cannot be transferred into action which secures basic entitlements and greater self-determination; and
- fail to compel sovereign states to give effect to international law.”

These authors demand a conception of human rights that takes into account the nature of relationships many women live in, and the forms of violence women in particular suffer.

How best to achieve this more “women-centred” conception of rights is the subject of much debate. Robyn Rowland notes that the present unequal position of women is inseparable from their historically unequal status (Rowland 1992). Centuries of argument assumed the domination of women by men was “natural”, inevitable and therefore not even to be considered in discussions of justice or rights. Some feminists have attempted to counter this non-consideration of gender by arguing for women’s rights to be respected under existing human rights provisions. They highlight situations where women’s rights have been violated *within* these parameters, and propose changes to the institutional structures which will enforce the human rights of women under existing definitions and laws (Engle 1992; Brems 1997).

Other feminist critics insist that “the diameter of the circle of *inclusion* in the realm of human rights law is entirely too narrow” (Binion 1995: 512). Even if contemporary rights theorists no longer consider the domination of women by men to be a “natural” inevitability, it does not necessarily follow that human rights law will go any way towards ending that domination. As Rebecca Cook (1995: 73) notes: “In a gendered world where sexes are not equal, the application to women of seemingly neutral laws . . . does not have a gender neutral result.”

The major feminist criticism of the traditional human rights framework is that, in focusing on the potential of the state as abuser, it fails to take into account abuses in the so-called “private sphere”. Gayle Binion (1995: 516) points out the profound consequences for women that this entails: “[Women are] rendered subject to the control of patriarchal familial authorities – fathers, brothers and husbands – with the understanding that familial matters are ‘private’, and therefore beyond the scope of governmental authority and intervention.”

“In a gendered world where sexes are not equal, the application to women of seemingly neutral laws . . . does not have a gender neutral result.”

However, women’s rights activists (and, more recently, Amnesty International) have noted that “the family” may only be considered separate or autonomous from government *at the sufferance of the state*. “Governments worldwide have not endowed ‘family’ with any significant degree of autonomy. The framework for the family is everywhere within a political arena” (Binion 1995: 519). The fact that the crimes of battery, rape, imprisonment, etc. are largely ignored by the state when perpetrated by a family member is a “failure of official responsibility, not an inability to police the environment. In a feminist analysis, the state’s choice to overlook such criminal acts is as abusive of human rights as a refusal to interfere with the slave trade” (Binion 1995: 519).

Many feminists insist, therefore, that governments accept responsibility for policing human rights violations within the “private” sphere. This involves a theoretical and practical acknowledgment that private actors can and do abuse human rights, and are subject to the same international conventions that bind governments. This may seem obvious, but is frequently overlooked in traditional liberal theory which casts the state as the primary human rights violator (Kiss 1995). In order to do this, activists have made use of existing human rights norms – such as discrimination, torture, due diligence, equality before the law, bodily integrity, and the right to health and life – to draw attention to the specific abuses women suffer. For example, similarities have been highlighted between the systematic abuse of bodily integrity that is domestic violence, and traditional concepts of torture.

According to Obando (2004), the potential for human rights theory to address gender-specific abuse can be recognised as follows: it officially recognises violence against women, not as an “individual” problem, but as one which governments have an obligation to respond to; it requires States to

“guarantee the eradication of social and economic conditions which maintain and perpetuate women’s subordination”; and it provides a feminist vocabulary in an international context.

Importantly, human rights *theory* does not, in general, make any distinction between abuses perpetrated by state or non-state actors – everyone has a right to physical integrity, for instance, regardless of who might threaten that right. It is only through *interpretation* of this theory that more value is placed on public actions, which is why human rights law (and, usually, human rights organisations) respond more actively to forms of state violence and to the repression of actors within the public/political sphere.

The difficulties women’s rights activists encounter in having rape and other forms of sexual assault recognised as a human rights abuse is a case in point. Feminist activists of the 1970s challenged the public/private dichotomy and showed rape to be a systematic and “political crime of violence against women” (Barry 1979: 40). Susan Brownmiller’s development of a “rape paradigm” defined rape as a political act, which was best illustrated by “the way rape is routinely handled by the police, in the courts and by public attitudes. The response of these institutions to rape victims reveals the structure in which sexual violence and slavery thrive” (1975: 41). In positioning rape as political, these theorists attempted to make visible what had previously been considered as an isolated and “individual” crime not worthy of international or even national attention.

However, prioritisation of the “public” sphere remains: thanks to women’s rights activists, rape is now recognised as a human rights abuse under international human rights instruments, but usually only when committed by state agents. Systematic rape in armed conflict was recognised as a war crime at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1996, and as a war crime or crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the newly-created International Criminal Court in 2001<sup>1</sup> (Obando 2004).

This in itself was a significant, if long-awaited, step, but it goes only part of the way towards addressing rape as a human rights issue. Joan Fitzpatrick notes the contrast between rape in wartime, considered as torture, and “the rape of women in peacetime where the failure of governments to take adequate preventive and punitive efforts to combat the practice is only beginning to be seen as creating state complicity in a human rights violation” (cited in Amnesty International 2004b: 13). That is, a similar seriousness of approach needs to be applied to rape committed in places other than a war zone or interrogation cell. The nominal conviction rates for rape and sexual assault in Australia indicate a lack of recognition of this violence, which would be considered intolerable in other cases of human rights abuse.

## Amnesty International’s work on women’s human rights

When Amnesty International was founded in 1961 its mandate was relatively simple: to work for the liberation of “prisoners of conscience” and to end torture. The mandate expanded somewhat over the next few decades to oppose the death penalty, extra-judicial executions and “disappearances”, but remained focused on civil and political rights abuses and to one class of perpetrator – governments, their agents and opposition groups. At the same time, the organisation defended and promoted the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, which, alongside the self-imposed limitations of the mandate, meant that inconsistencies and contradictions inevitably emerged (Watson 1997).

Amnesty International began to focus on the issue of abuse against women in 1989, when it organised formal working groups to document women’s rights violations. It concluded that women suffer more rights violations than any other group in the world, both in times of war and through traditional practices excused by culture (Bahar 1996). This study culminated in the release of *Women in the Front Line* (Amnesty International 1991), which focused on abuses perpetrated by the state and opposition groups. The women mentioned were primarily activists, but the report also noted the case of women relatives of male activists, who were similarly targeted. The report did not, therefore, detail abuses perpetrated in the “private” sphere, nor did it go any way towards a theorisation of the relationship between the “private” and “public” spheres. However, it did extensively cover the forms of gender-specific abuses women suffer at the hands of the state, such as rape, sexual humiliation, and threats while in detention, along with other abuses that men also suffer.

As Saba Bahar (1996: 107) notes in her article on Amnesty International and the family: “To address the specific violence that women experience, the organisation had to reconsider not only the private/public ►

division but also its own emphasis on state-related violence against women". In the report, *Human Rights are Women's Right*, released that same year, Amnesty International (1995: 5) noted that: "While women are under-represented in national and international decision-making structures, they are over-represented among victims of rights abuse . . . Because of their gender women are at risk of a range of violent abuses by private organisations and individuals."

The report therefore articulated an obvious verbal commitment to opposing human rights abuses against women, wherever and by whomever they were perpetrated. Despite this, because of its mandate of the time, Amnesty could not act on the vast majority of such abuses: those that take place at the hands of family members, partners or acquaintances. Also, although Amnesty had always openly proclaimed the equality, and indivisibility, of all "generations" of rights, the traditional limiting of its action to one specific "generation" was a prioritisation in itself. In women's experience, the absence of economic or social rights can quickly translate into an abuse on the integrity of their person. An obvious example is the social sanctioning of sexual assault and domestic violence, an abuse further compounded if lack of economic independence makes it impossible for a woman to leave a violent partner.

At the International Council Meeting of 2001 these anomalies were addressed in a revolutionary decision. After a four-year mandate review, the existing statute was completely changed by unanimous vote. It was noted that by limiting oppositional work to a particular set of civil and political rights, Amnesty was undermining the notion of indivisibility of all rights and damaging its own credibility. Therefore, a "full-spectrum approach" was adopted, and the new "mission" became "to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights". Amnesty would now address "governments, intergovernmental organisations, armed political groups, companies and other non-state actors" (Amnesty International 2004c). Activism would be limited only according to the gravity of the abuse, and prioritise those abuses that fell within the current Integrated Strategic Plan.

The Standing Committee on the Mandate drew up a partial list of the following gender-specific abuses by non-state actors that could be considered to be "grave violations":

- sexual slavery, forced prostitution, child prostitution;
- girl-child marriage, sale of and trafficking in children, servile marriage contracts;
- bride burning, dowry deaths or related assaults;
- female infanticide, denial of basic nutrition, health or other vital needs to the girl-child because of son-preference;
- female genital mutilation and other traditional practices affecting women's physical and mental integrity;
- other traditional practices affecting physical or mental integrity (for example, brutal or dangerous forms of scarring or mutilation);
- domestic violence (abuse of women, children and the elderly in the home);
- rape and other sexual assault; and
- forced abortion, forced sterilisation.

It is this mandate change that has made the *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign possible. Until the distinction between different categories of rights and that of state/non-state perpetrators was dropped, it was impossible to envisage a campaign that could adequately address violence against women within the organisation's mandate.

## The Stop Violence Against Women campaign and conference

Kate Gilmore's framing of violence against women as a "human rights scandal", as quoted in the opening paragraph of this article, will not seem an exaggeration to activists working in the sexual assault or domestic violence fields, yet it aims to produce a sea change in public perception of human rights. When most people think of Amnesty International they think of political prisoners. When they

think of human rights abuse, they think of torture or imprisonment at the hands of state agents. The prisoner in the imagination is male; the torturer opening the cell door is uniformed. Yet that same fear of imminent violence is felt by countless women on hearing their partner or husband's key turning in the lock of their own front doors. The aim of the campaign (and the challenge for Amnesty and women's rights activists) is to enable the public, and policy makers, to make that connection.

The *Stop Violence Against Women* Australian campaign was launched at Parliament House, Canberra on International Women's Day, on 8 March 2004, and campaigning activities are scheduled to begin in October. Parliamentarians present at the launch were invited to "sign up" to stop violence against women by leaving coloured handprints on a banner – an international campaign activity linked to the message that stopping violence against women is "in our hands". A central tenet of the campaign is that: "Violence against women is never normal, legal or acceptable and should never be tolerated or justified. Everyone – individuals, communities, governments, and international bodies – has a responsibility to put a stop to it and to redress the suffering it causes" (Amnesty International 2004a: 110).

Amnesty also held a *Stop Violence Against Women* conference in Fremantle on 4-6 June 2004, in recognition, as Mara Moustaphine (National Director of Amnesty International Australia) pointed out, of the "enormous gap between the rhetoric of human rights for women and the reality so many women experience everyday". The conference served as a forum, not only for Amnesty workers, but also for representatives from Indigenous communities, women's rights organisations, government agencies, support and service providers, the judiciary and police, as well as survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, to exchange ideas on how to "move beyond the mere legal recognition of rights to the full achievement of those rights" (Moustaphine 2004). Papers from the conference have been posted on the Amnesty Australia website at: [www.amnesty.org.au/](http://www.amnesty.org.au/).

The campaign has a dual focus – first, on violence against women in the family and, second, on violence against women in conflict/post-conflict situations. The dual focus is not only a reflection of the sites of greatest danger for women, but is also symbolic of the organisation's new direction: "private" and "public" violence against women is recognised as a continuum. This "violence is both rooted in discrimination and serves to reinforce discrimination . . . which denies women equality with men in all areas of life" (Amnesty International 2004a: 5). Violence against women in the community, while not a focus of the campaign, is also theorised as part of this continuum.

The campaign's approach will focus on addressing government responsibility for women's rights through the "due diligence" approach. Governments must show a certain level of "diligence" to prevent violations of women's human rights, to investigate and punish acts of violence, and to provide compensation.

"Due diligence" means governments must respect, protect, fulfil and promote human rights:

- *Respect* – they must not abuse or interfere with human rights.
- *Protect* – they must take measures to prevent third parties from interfering with human rights, through instituting laws, policies and practices that protect victims of violence, provide them with appropriate remedies, and bring perpetrators to justice;
- *Fulfil* – they must ensure the appropriate infrastructure to support these laws, policies and practices, and to render them effective;
- *Promote* – they must develop specific promotional programs and measures (through education public information broadcasting, information to service users, and so on) to make women's right to freedom from violence a reality.

This will be Amnesty's first international campaign of such magnitude to be implemented under the new mandate. It will be six years long, and the first time that Amnesty has taken a clear-cut stand on ►

Federal Treasurer Peter Costello makes his mark in support of the *Stop Violence Against Women* campaign. © AIA



Shadow Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Jenny Macklin MP (left) with Kate Gilmore, AI Executive Deputy Secretary General (right) © AIA

gender-based violence as a human rights violation under international law. The organisation therefore acknowledges that there will be gaps in its knowledge, understanding and methodologies, and has specified that it will need to learn from others, particularly local service providers and activist organisations, with long-term experience in the field of violence against women.

Merryn Smith, the Convenor of Amnesty International Australia's National Women's Team, said in an interview with ACSSA that: "Amnesty has consulted with agencies in all states during the early stages of the campaign to build an understanding of the issues in the Australian context. This consultation will continue throughout the campaign, to tailor Amnesty's international campaign to local conditions, and to ensure that service providers are prepared for any increase in demand for their services that may follow Amnesty's public education campaign".

As the Secretary General of Amnesty, Irene Khan, noted at the international launch of the campaign: "[Women] are agents of change, who have led and continue to lead the struggle to expose and counter violence, to bring dramatic changes in law and practice" (Khan 2004). Amnesty is therefore keen to forge new relationships and strengthen older ones with such organisations, marking another break from its traditional, more isolated, approach.

In turn, Merryn Smith says: "[T]he campaign will offer policy makers a human rights framework, which can be used to identify, measure and close the gaps between existing policy and practice and the responsibility of all governments to respect, protect and fulfil women's right to live free from violence. Similar campaigns conducted by Amnesty International in other countries will also provide alternative models for policy that may be adaptable to the Australian context."

Amnesty has produced several documents that could be of use to activists, service providers and policy makers. The campaign report, *It's In Our Hands: Stop Violence Against Women* (Amnesty International 2004a) provides an overview of women's human rights internationally, including a broad analysis of the causes and consequences of abuse alongside individual women's stories. It also outlines international human

rights laws and state obligations, and devotes a section to "organising for change" using the human rights framework. In addition, as part of this first stage of the campaign, Amnesty has released a two-part "Activist's Toolkit" entitled *Making Rights a Reality*. The first part, subtitled "The Duty of States to Address Violence Against Women" gives a more in-depth analysis of government's legal duty to take action to address violence against women. The second part, subtitled "Building Your Campaign", is a step-by-step guide to lobbying for change. The *It's In Our Hands* report, and the two-part toolkit are available online at: <http://web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/reports-index-eng>, or by calling Amnesty International Australia on 1300 300 920.



Senator Kay Patterson addresses the launch of *It's In Our Hands* with (left to right) Bruce Baird MP, Peter Costello MP, Kate Gilmore, Jenny Macklin MP, Senator Lyn Allison and Senator Kerry Nettle looking on. © AIA

## "Due diligence" in the Australian context

As part of its "Agenda for Change" (Amnesty International 2004a: 109), Amnesty urges all governments to ratify and implement the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and its *Optional Protocol* (United Nations 1979). Australia has ratified the Convention but not the Protocol. The Protocol is especially important because it "establishes a communications procedure under which individual women, or groups of women, may complain to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that their rights under the convention have been violated" (Evatt 2002: 13)<sup>2</sup>.

In effect, the Protocol institutes the right to petition, and without it, "Australian women are left without either national or international recourse in areas where the Convention has not been fully implemented, such as where there are gaps in the protection of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, or where it is subject to exemptions" (Evatt 2002: 13). Although Australia is a signatory to the Convention itself, areas have been identified where Australia's compliance falls short of its obligations: "The

situation of Indigenous women is well below international human rights standards in health, education and housing, life expectancy and maternal and infant mortality. Violence is also a huge problem for Indigenous women” (Evatt 2002: 11).

Importantly, the due diligence approach provides an avenue of accountability. For governments at all levels, and their authorities in the police and judicial system, the first step in the establishment of due diligence is the *respect* of human rights. Accordingly, governments and their agents must not themselves abuse such rights. In the Australian context, human rights organisations have raised concerns regarding the ongoing practice of strip-searching women prisoners (Kilroy 2004) and the effect of the immigration detention system on the mental and physical health of women detainees (Amnesty International 2002).

The second step in the establishment of due diligence is to *protect* human rights. This means ensuring punishment and redress where human rights are abused by private actors. In Australia, while the criminalisation of physical and sexual violence against women exists in all jurisdictions, extremely low conviction rates means that due diligence has not yet been achieved, and therefore that reforms are necessary. Some such reforms in regards to sexual assault are outlined in the following section. In addition, Amnesty has raised concerns that state (Federal and State/Territory) funding to enable women to escape situations of violence and to access counselling is inadequate. This means that many women continue to live in situations of violence, particularly in rural and remote communities, Indigenous communities and amongst culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The third aspect of due diligence is the obligation to *fulfil* human rights. This means ensuring access to justice, such as through the removal of discriminatory laws. In Australia, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1985* has gone some way towards addressing this. Amnesty’s concerns regarding sexual assault include the practice of some magistrates/judges to excuse a man’s violence because they understand it to be part of a man’s “culture”. This is an illegal defence under international human rights law. Another concern is that, although most police forces now require recruits to receive some training on sexual assault, officers who received training ten or twenty years ago are not always re-trained and may be in positions of leadership, which can undermine the training recruits receive. Furthermore, for women in remote communities, lack of money, lack of transport, and/or the inability to leave a community that has condoned violence means access to justice and services is impossible. Indigenous women wishing to access Indigenous legal services face the additional obstruction of being turned away if the perpetrator has already accessed the service.

The final aspect of due diligence, and the one most often overlooked in traditional interpretations of human rights obligations, is the obligation to *promote* these rights (some readings of due diligence place this under the obligation to “fulfil”). The establishment of national plans of action to address specific forms of abuse is a due diligence requirement particularly important to the promotion of women’s human rights. The Australian Government’s *National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault* constitutes such a plan in this field. The obligation to obtain statistics on violence against women is also being fulfilled through the 2005 *Personal Safety Survey*, being prepared in a partnership between the Office of the Status of Women and Australian Bureau of Statistics. These initiatives give us the tools to promote women’s rights to live free from sexual assault and implement strategies to address the abuse. However, ongoing evaluation is necessary to ensure that any such strategies work: that they actually stop violence against women. Where they do not work, new strategies must be found. To do this there is an identified need to work in close consultation with existing service providers and advocacy organisations.

## Sexual assault as a human rights issue

Identifying women’s safety as a human right has implications for sexual assault prevention “both in terms of framing the issue of violence against women in a language recognisable to government, and also in terms of being able to access the persuasive argument of international obligations” (Lambert and Pickering 2000: 33). As Marg D’arcy (Program Manager of CASA House, Victoria) pointed out in an interview with the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault during the *Stop Violence Against Women* conference: “Saying that women should be protected is very patronising. It implies that there’s something lesser about them. Whereas if you say that women’s *rights* should be protected, that women have a *right* not to be violated, it’s a much more powerful language to use.” ➤

In this, the human rights framework has certain advantages over welfare-based models. Government and individual obligations to uphold human rights are universally recognised and undeniable, while welfare provisions are notoriously vulnerable to the political, economic and cultural exigencies of the time (which rarely prioritise women's concerns). This is not to say that welfare policy is not essential. As Rhonda Cumberland (2003: 10)<sup>3</sup> says: "Real prevention of family violence requires a conventional welfare policy and a human rights response." The link between the two is the requirement of due diligence, whereby international human rights law demands a certain standard from domestic law and policy. Governments must show due diligence in providing a welfare system that protects and fulfils women's *right* to live free from violence.

An important aspect of the due diligence concept is evaluation. It is not enough to criminalise violence against women and put programs into place aimed at stopping it. Such initiatives must be regularly assessed to see if they *work*. Incidence data, research on "hidden" forms of violence, and women's experience of violence must be taken into account, and if legislation or policy is failing to stop such violence then it must be reviewed. Whilst such evaluation will be necessarily long-term and ongoing, Amnesty, along with service providers and researchers, have outlined several current areas of concern, summarised below.

One aspect of this re-traumatisation is the humiliation and "victim-blaming" of women through the admission of sexual history as evidence in sexual assault cases.

In order to meet due diligence obligations to fulfil women's human rights, access to justice must be ensured. This goes beyond the criminalisation of sexual assault. The criminal justice system must be accessible to all victim/survivors, and be effective in bringing perpetrators of assault to justice. Judicial responses to sexual assault at the state/territory level vary,

but due diligence concerns common to the different jurisdictions include: first, that the criminal justice response revictimises women; second, that there is a high rate of attrition in sexual assault cases; and third, that prosecution and conviction rates remain disproportionately low (Heenan and McKelvie 1996; Victorian Law Reform Commission 2003; Stubbs 2003).

Most jurisdictions have reviewed definitions of sexual assault in recent years, and have incorporated a broader definition of sexual assault, but this has not led to an increase in prosecution rates, nor diminished the re-traumatisation of women through the court process.

One aspect of this re-traumatisation is the humiliation and "victim-blaming" of women through the admission of sexual history as evidence in sexual assault cases. While feminist objections to this practice have led to states imposing varying degrees of restrictions, "there is no legislature that has introduced a blanket prohibition on its use" (Heenan 2003). Furthermore, such restrictions and regulations that do exist are subject to the discretionary power of judges to interpret and apply them, often conservatively. As a result, such restrictions do not appear to be contributing to any reduction in the admission of sexual history evidence in recent years. On the contrary, Heenan's research reveals an apparent *increase* in the proportion of Victorian trials where such evidence has been admitted since 1989. Studies have attributed this failing to definitional problems, inconsistent approaches to interpretation, and outright breaches of regulations (Henning 1996; Department for Women in New South Wales 1996). This clearly impacts on the right of women to access the judicial system (as it serves as a deterrent to reporting), as well as due diligence obligations to punish offenders and obtain redress (when used by the defence to place the complainant's credit in doubt and therefore reduce the chances of conviction).

Amnesty has also identified the very low rates of successful prosecutions for cases of sexual assault (in all jurisdictions) as a failure of state responsibility to establish a legal and administrative system to address violence against women. When asked at Amnesty's Fremantle *Stop Violence Against Women* conference in June 2004 if low conviction rates could be interpreted as a failure of due diligence, Hilary Fisher (Project Leader of the campaign) said: "Absolutely. If [a human rights] violation happens not only in the battlefield or in the community, but also in the bedroom, and the government know of that, or are aware of it, or haven't put things into place to prevent that from happening, then they have a responsibility that they're failing in."

Participants at the Fremantle conference workshop on "due diligence approaches to judicial proceedings for sexual assault cases" identified several possibilities for improvement within the current system. These included increased training on sexual assault at every level of the judiciary; the provision

of special waiting rooms in court buildings for the victim/complainant so that they are not forced to wait in the same corridor as the defendant's family; and increased explanation and clarification of the judicial process for the victim/complainant. Suggestions for more substantial reforms included the establishment of special courts to deal solely with sexual assault cases, with specialist-trained judges and lawyers; and the adoption of a less adversarial, more victim-centred trial system, such as that established by recent reforms in the Philippines.

Marg D'arcy clarified what she saw as the major problem of the current system: "[W]ith a crime that happens in private, where there's very rarely any physical evidence and very rarely witnesses, we do have to somehow recognise that a presumption of innocence for the man is a presumption of disbelief in the woman. We have to turn that around in some way. I think it's actually going to require a fundamental shift in how we think about the law and criminal justice and the rights of the defendant".

This may prove a difficult area for Amnesty to engage with, due to the organisation's historical support of defendant rights in the criminal system. However, as D'arcy points out: "The problem with sexual assault is that the evidence is the woman. This makes it different from any other crime, which means we may need to work out a way of treating it differently. It may mean rather than putting the onus on the state to prove that he committed the crime, put the onus on him to show that he actually took every step that he possibly could to know that the woman was consenting. [This] really would be a positive step. And it's the only way things are going to change."

The Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department, although not having direct responsibility for government response to sexual assault, established the Model Criminal Code Officers Committee as a means of developing uniform criminal laws between different states and territories. Following a three-year period of consultation, the Committee released a report on sexual assault laws in 1999. A review of the implementation of these recommendations at the state/territory level, (and, where implemented, their affect on access to the criminal justice system for victim/survivors of sexual assault and their impact on prosecution and conviction rates) would be immensely useful in determining fulfilment of due diligence obligations to ensure access to justice. No such review has yet been undertaken.

The 1996 "Heroines of Fortitude" report undertaken by the New South Wales Department for Women also made many important recommendations, most of which, eight years later, have not been implemented (Stubbs 2003). However, as Julie Stubbs points out, law reform cannot be relied upon as the sole means of ensuring justice for women in sexual assault cases. Past reforms, such as the restrictions on the admission of sexual history as evidence, have "been blunted by masculinist assumptions underpinning the criminal law, and the centrality of constructs such as consent which are based on understandings of women as property and sexual relations as something done to women by men" (Stubbs 2003 citing O'Donovan 1997; Hunter 1999). Stubbs notes that cultural mythologies about women and sexuality are likely to continue to subvert the effect of various law reform strategies.

In workshops focusing on sexual assault at the Fremantle conference, there was an overwhelming consensus that any strategies to address sexual assault need to go beyond harm-minimisation and aim at structural change to societal tolerance of discrimination and violence against women. The myth that sexual assault arises primarily from "stranger danger" has been effectively challenged by feminist campaigning, and it is now understood that women are far more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know, often in their own homes, with rarely any signs of physical violence. While physical domestic violence has been the subject of a recent national campaign, studies have shown that intimate partner sexual assault remains a largely hidden form of violence, "less likely than other types of assault to be reported [to police] and to result in the use of victim services" (Coumarelos and Allen 1999, cited in Heenan 2004). As such, it is clearly an issue that would benefit from awareness-raising campaigning.

The obligation of due diligence extends beyond ensuring access to justice, and encompasses the promotion and protection of women's human rights. In the case of sexual assault, economic and social discrimination contribute not only to its prevalence, but also to the reluctance or inability of women to report to police. As Hilary Fisher noted in an interview with ACSSA: "It's all very well to have the laws in place for a woman to be able to go to the authorities to complain about an incidence of violence, but if she doesn't have the money for the bus fare, or if there isn't a police station for hundreds of miles because she's in a rural area, if there is no refuge for her to go to, then . . . what sort of resources are available to her?"

Fisher stressed that the lack of such resources, and resulting low reporting rates, “are to do with the failure of the authorities, not just federal government, but within the states and also at a municipal level, to take violence against women seriously and to put in place measures so that women feel able to come forward”.

Economic resources are an issue for services as well as for individual women. Wendy Weeks’ national study of women-specific services found that: “de-funding, amalgamations, and ‘mainstreaming’ women’s programs and services into generalist non-government organisations” (Weeks 1998: 4), had become a trend throughout the 1990s, with “funds for advocacy, campaigns, community development, coalition and network infrastructure building . . . no longer available.” Participants at the Fremantle conference reported a need to strengthen the advocacy component of feminist sexual assault services. While the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) has taken on important leadership roles, including the development of the National Standards of Practice, it was suggested that their activities are limited by a lack of funding.

The recently released report by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), *The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence*, provides an economic and health model through which due diligence might also be measured. Amnesty’s campaign, and indeed international human rights law, stresses the responsibility of everyone to uphold human rights, extending the responsibility of due diligence to individuals and organisations. An obvious example of this is the duty of health professionals. In Melanie Heenan’s (2004: 19) report on male partner sexual violence, she notes the significance of “how few women are ever asked by their GPs, and other service providers, about whether they are experiencing intimate partner violence, especially when women regularly present with the kinds of injuries or symptoms that are strongly suggestive of their being subjected to regular episodes of some form of violence” (Heenan 2004: 19). This, she suggests is “symptomatic of a general reluctance by health professionals to adopt a more proactive role in supporting women who may be experiencing violence”.

### “It’s in our hands”

The human rights approach to ending violence against women, while problematic according to some feminist analyses, carries with it the legitimacy of international law. As such, it allows us to demand the full achievement of women’s safety, not just as a “women’s concern” or as part of a “feminist agenda”, but according to internationally recognised conventions. Australia is a signatory to the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), which demands not only women’s safety, but also women’s right to live free from discrimination, be it economic, social or cultural.

Upholding women’s human rights is not only a responsibility of states and their authorities, but also that of each institution, and individual, in a community. The obligation not to commit acts of violence is obvious, but due diligence extends beyond this. Health professionals who fail to take action when women present injuries consistent with violence are failing in their human rights obligation of due diligence. The same is true when any individual within a society becomes aware of a human rights abuse and stays silent. Failing to call the police, for example, when a neighbour, friend or relative is suffering violence in their home, is a failure of due diligence on the part of an individual. If the police come but do not take any action, or take ineffective action, they are failing in their obligation to due diligence. If charges are laid, but the perpetrator of the abuse is not convicted, then this is a failure of due diligence on the part of the judicial system. If such failures are repetitive, ongoing and systematic then this is a failure of due diligence on the part of the state.

The ultimate requirement of due diligence is to create a society where women live free from violence and the fear of violence. This is not an ideal or a privilege, it is a basic human right. Such violence can only happen because we, as a society, allow it to happen: we find excuses for it. States and their authorities have a particular responsibility, as their “regulation of violence conveys the moral and social values that are the public face of the message about such behaviour” (Weeks et al. 1998: 2). But the responsibility lies also with communities and individuals. Amnesty’s call for the *Stop Violence Against Women* Campaign is: “I will not do it, I will not tolerate it, and I will not rest until it has been eradicated”. Ending violence against women, Amnesty says, is literally in our hands.

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## Endnotes

1. The Rome Statute was recently threatened when two amendments tabled by the United States were proposed to a Canadian-led resolution on the elimination of violence against women. The amendments were intended to "weaken the language on sexual and reproductive health care services and delete language calling on states to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which recognises that sexual violence . . . can constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity" (UN Commission on Human Rights *Sexual Rights are Human Rights*, Press Release 21/04/2004). The amendments were defeated.
2. Elizabeth Evatt's article contains a useful overview of Australia's position with regards to CEDAW, including where gaps exist and possibilities for activism.
3. In her article in *Parity* (vol. 16, no. 10, 2003), Rhonda Cumberland lists a number of proposals by which human rights mechanisms could be incorporated into a service framework.

**Lara Fergus** is a Research Officer with the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

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## ACSSA invites your views

Human rights organisations like Amnesty have only recently begun to work on abuses by perpetrators not connected with state institutions, and as such are hoping to learn from those with greater experience in the field, such as sexual assault and domestic violence service providers.

The "due diligence" framework has likewise only recently been applied to violence against women, and standards according to which it can be measured in international law have not yet been finalised.

This is the time for activists working to end violence against women to make their views heard on this topic.

- Is "due diligence" a useful tool in applying to how we measure the success of strategies aimed at reducing or preventing sexual assault?

- How could "due diligence" be measured?
- What would a "duly diligent" society look like?
- What are some significant ways it would differ from our existing society?

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault invites readers to discuss these issues through *ACSSA-Discuss* – a moderated email list for the discussion of topics of interest to people involved with the sexual assault field.

To join *ACSSA-Discuss* send an email to "majordomo@aifs.gov.au" with the message "subscribe acssa-discuss", and leave the subject line blank.

For more information about the ACSSA email discussion group visit the *Mailing Lists* page on the ACSSA website at [www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/)

## Homelessness and sexual assault

Each issue of ACSSA Aware includes a profile that offers a perspective on current issues in service delivery. In this edition, ACSSA speaks to DANIEL MOSS and DAVID TULLY OF of SideStreet, a counselling service of UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide.

### ACSSA: Can you describe the work of SideStreet, and how the service responds to the issue of sexual assault?

**SideStreet:** At the start of 2002, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide began to operate SideStreet Counselling Service. SideStreet works with young women and men aged 12 to 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have experienced sexual and/or physical abuse. SideStreet provides a counselling service that has the flexibility and responsiveness to engage young people dealing with the effects of abuse and homelessness. The service provides counselling to young people in the metropolitan area of South Australia and consultancy to workers across the state.

The establishment of the service was an important recognition that sexual abuse is a significant contributing cause and factor in the continuation of youth homelessness. Research states that between 50 per cent to 75 per cent of young people who are homeless have experienced childhood sexual assault. Effective counselling and support that addresses the issues of abuse is effective in promoting physical and mental health, emotional well being and therefore also stable housing outcomes.

Too often the effects of abuse are not addressed through young people's trajectory through homelessness. Too often the experience of underlying trauma is the common theme that draws together young people who experience long-term homelessness rather than short-term crisis homelessness. What is often absent from the service response to these young people is any consistent and coordinated response to the effects of the abuse they were subjected to. Often service delivery models fail in combining practical assistance with effective responses to childhood trauma.

Once young people become homeless they are at extreme risk of further victimisation. However, the extent of this risk is poorly understood, researched or responded to. In the report *Living Rough: Preventing Crime and Victimisation Among Homeless Young People* (Report to National Crime Prevention Strategy, 1999) this matter of victimisation of young homeless people is documented. The report notes: "There is a shortage of material which identifies programs and models which target young homeless people at risk of victimisation and crime. The programs available deal more commonly with young people as perpetrators rather than victims of crime. There are few models which deal specifically with homeless young people who experience sexual assault."<sup>1</sup>

A research paper entitled *Victims of Violence: The Case of Homeless Youth*<sup>2</sup> looked at this issue. This research examined the experiences of victimisation amongst young homeless people in Melbourne. It was found that in a 12-month period, 65 per cent had been physically assaulted, and 52 per cent had been sexually assaulted. The research also found that, overall, 76 per cent of females and 29 per cent of males have been sexually abused whilst homeless, and that, of those who had experienced these crimes, only 20 per cent tell service providers about the abuse.

### ACSSA: What is the SideStreet service framework?

**SS:** SideStreet is designed to be able to respond to young people who are homeless and have traditionally had trouble gaining access, or keeping in contact with, counselling services. The service employs an active assertive outreach model that allows workers to continue to work with the young person if they change areas. Counselling can occur in a variety of locations depending on the client's needs. The model provides a significant advantage to young people who are often transient and moving from service to service and place to place.

The focus of the service is on issues of childhood sexual assault and recent sexual assault but works extensively with related issues of domestic violence, suicidal ideation, relationships, alcohol and other drugs. Young people present to the service with a wide range of issues. ➤

The service also looks at developing creative engagement processes. This might mean meeting the young person at some place they nominate rather than at an office. Often young people come to the service with friends or become connected into the service while waiting for a friend who is using the service. The service is designed to address the needs of young women and men: about two thirds of the clients are young women and about a third young men. Young women work with female counsellors and young men generally work with male counsellors.

In terms of response strategy, SideStreet works on three broad levels:

- (1) Provision of counselling, support and resources for young people.
- (2) Provision of consultancy to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) youth sector. Part of our task at SideStreet is to work within the SAAP sector to make workers aware that many young people within their services are struggling with issues such as anger, violence, poor self-esteem, self-harm, suicidal ideation, drugs and alcohol, and unsafe sexual practices as a result of sexual assault. Therefore SideStreet aims to provide support to workers so that they may be able to more effectively and confidently work with young people around these issues, and facilitate referrals when appropriate.
- (3) Provision of education and training to the youth sector and wider community about childhood sexual assault and the connection to the issue of youth homelessness.

#### **ACSSA: What is the philosophy underlying SideStreet's approach to service provision?**

**SS:** As an organisation, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide works from a strengths perspective, and SideStreet maintains a central philosophy that young people are not to blame for the abuse that they have been subjected to. The service in both its counselling and consultancy work seeks to identify social constructs that have young people feeling responsible for the abuse they have experienced. Clear understandings about power relations between men and women, adults, children and young people are central to this task. Tactics used by men who sexually offend against children and young people involve the use of psychological and emotional strategies to separate and isolate boys and girls from other family members, especially mothers.

In the work of SideStreet we often see young people struggling with the effects of abuse in many different ways. The connection between the abuse and the difficulties they are facing is not often acknowledged by others. If young people feel blamed for their behaviour without any acknowledgment of the abuse and injustice inflicted upon them it is hard for them to see ways forward. By acknowledging injustice and misuse of power young people are often empowered with the opportunity to understand the effects of abuse differently. This allows young people to see their grief, sadness or anger as more than damage or deficiency but as a genuine reaction or response to injustice, unfairness and abuse of power and privilege.

Within that, we work to provide a flexible, non-threatening service, which has the ability to allow young people opportunities to gain different understandings about what happened to them. We are very aware of not trying to impose a therapeutic or counselling language on young people. The importance of young people experiencing counselling "like normal discussion", rather than a weird thing that someone will do to them, is important.

#### **ACSSA: Is the public conception of homelessness limited?**

**SS:** It is politically more comfortable to think of young people who are homeless as "runaways", or drug addicts who just want to "party" or won't face up to family problems, rather than victims of crime that we as a society often ignore.

For the vast majority of homeless young people, violence and sexual abuse at home had begun the merry-go-round of living on the streets, staying with strangers, stopping off at friends' places, squats, and living in supported accommodation. Due to having to leave home before they are emotionally and cognitively ready and having to stay in unsafe accommodation means that these young people are at significant risk of further abuse and exploitation. This then leaves young people with no choice but to rely on strangers, whether within services or on the streets, for the care, understanding and protection they can be generally expected from parents.

It is important to see this leaving home as a protest and resistance to intolerably unjust conditions rather than the "running away" being seen as maladaptive or "not facing up to family problems". However too often these young people are left to fall through a system that further labels them as failures and reinforces a self-perception of being hopeless, to blame and of no value. Far too often in considering child protection matters young people who are experiencing homelessness are left out of consideration or are put in the "too hard basket".

Childhood sexual assault also plays a role in other pathways into homelessness. Often the effect of sexual abuse that is historical or occurred outside the family plays a major factor in family conflict. The effects of abuse in young people's lives often relate to issues of drug and alcohol use, emotional difficulties, depression, self-harm and anger. All these issues are cited as major factors in family conflict or in conflict in alternate care/ foster placements that can lead to homelessness. It can be seen that for some young people the abuse may not have occurred in the family home or by a close family member but still plays a major role in them becoming homeless and remaining homeless for longer periods of time.

**ACSSA: What myths would you most like to debunk about young people and homelessness?**

**SS:** Young homeless people are neither helpless nor hopeless; they have genuine needs and experiences, which are largely unrecognised or ignored, and have skills that, with assistance, can enable them to contribute fully to their own lives and that of the community. The public still seem to confine their definition of homeless people as those that sleep on the streets. What they do not recognise is that there are many young people who spend years between friends couches, SAAP agencies and relatives. These young people have little chance of procuring permanent housing, have very little support, and are constantly unsafe.

**ACSSA: What are the greatest challenges you face in providing the service?**

**SS:** The young people we work with have significant needs around health, housing and income. This means we have to deal with a lot of systems such as mental health, corrections, State statutory departments and youth housing providers. We are lucky that within the organisation we also run a youth Health Service called StreetLink. This allows ready access to a GP and nurse who are very skilled at working with young people.

Young people can have difficult relations with other services providers around accommodation. Due to the effects of abuse, these young people are seen as having behavioural problems, drug and alcohol or mental health issues, which means they are asked to leave services or are not suitable for accommodation models. This means we are in position of trying to advocate with services or somehow materialise housing options for young people.

**ACSSA: What are the most important skills workers at SideStreet need?**

**SS:** Most critical is the ability to initially engage with young people in ways that open up space for them to feel comfortable to talk about difficult issues and know that they are being listened to and believed. To talk about issues that are not easy for young people to communicate, in an honest and down to earth manner, is of critical importance. Counsellors at SideStreet utilise a range of skills, particularly in engaging young people in a counselling process, assessing issues of risk and, when appropriate, assisting with practical issues. This necessitates an awareness of the client's stage of physical and emotional development and learning style, rather than imposing a model.

**ACSSA: Was it difficult securing recognition of the need for a service like SideStreet?**

**SS:** Some service providers have been traditionally reluctant to acknowledge the experience of sexual abuse of young people within their services. One of the crucial tasks for SideStreet early on was to work within the sector to create cultures that did not reinforce silencing of young people's stories. There is still, despite some improvements, reluctance within society to recognise the large prevalence rates of sexual abuse. SideStreet has attempted to work with services so that these attitudes of denial are not replicated within services.

**ACSSA: How do young people's experiences of homelessness impact on their need for services?**

**SS:** Young people need services that are flexible, are willing to follow them around, are willing to advocate for them and which believe in them, particularly considering that many of them have had bad experiences with services throughout their lives. It has been important that our service is not time limited as many homeless young people will leave and return to our service at a later date. A service culture that is professional but relaxed and flexible is important. An important feature of SideStreet is that it is able to provide continuity of workers for young people as they move around the service system.

**ACSSA: What service would SideStreet most like to be able to provide, that is currently not feasible?**

**SS:** There are many ways we would like to develop. To be able to provide more in the way of training and service development would be ideal. To do more group work and have the resources to adopt a community development approach with young people would also be useful. It would be beneficial if we could look more at resource development for youth workers and other service providers. ➤

### ACSSA: Does homelessness have an impact on the decision to report sexual assault/abuse or pursue a criminal justice response?

SS: Sexual assault is greatly underreported amongst homeless youth and those who do not live in a stable or supportive environment for a number of reasons, including: vulnerability to further violence as a result of reporting, such as continued threats or retaliation for reporting from the perpetrator's friends/family; a history of negative experiences with police and state welfare authorities; fear of not being believed and/or past experiences of not being believed; and feeling like they put themselves at risk by their actions and therefore do not deserve to be protected, or that they are to blame.

It is important to note that despite these barriers many young people do choose to report, particularly to protect younger siblings and other children and young people. This courage needs to be acknowledged and we need to do more work so that the legal system can work with these young people.

#### Endnotes

1. Strategic Partner Pty Ltd. 1999. *Living Rough: Preventing Crime and Victimization Among Homeless Young People*, Report to National Crime Prevention Strategy.
2. Alder C. 'Victims of Violence: The Case of Homeless Youth', in *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*. 24 (13) March 1991.

■ ACSSA is grateful to Daniel Moss and David Tully of SideStreet Counselling Service for taking the time to answer our questions about the service.

Sidestreet Counselling Service

14 Pitt Street, Adelaide 5000 Phone: (08) 8202 5871 Fax: (08) 8202 5869  
Open 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday

## GOOD PRACTICE PROFILE

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is developing a national collection of Good Practice Programs and Responses for Sexual Assault. This collection, accessible from the ACSSA website, provides an important resource for informing the work of service providers and policy makers in developing or refining models for responding to sexual assault.

### Sexual Violence Services Tampon Card, Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service, South Australia

An example of good practice recently added to the collection is the Sexual Violence Services Tampon Card project, by Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service in collaboration with De Jour, an Australian, female-owned company producing sanitary products for women.

The objective of this project was to provide women throughout Australia with information regarding sexual violence and contact numbers for support services, in a way that was discreet and private. This was achieved through developing an information card on sexual violence, with contact details for support services in each state, and utilising De Jour's method of distributing health information to women by including the sexual violence information card in De Jour tampon packets. The message on the card emphasised that seeking help takes courage, that women should be believed and not blamed, and that confidential support is available.

"Good practice" aspects of the project included:

- demonstration of sensitivity towards the barriers faced by women in disclosing and reporting sexual violence, by providing information to women in a private way that does not identify them as someone who has experienced sexual violence and presenting the message that confidential help is available;
- taking account of research indicating that most women who have experienced sexual violence will tell a friend before anyone else, information cards carried the message "believe – don't blame" to women who may hear a disclosure of sexual violence from a friend.

### Submissions invited

ACSSA invites submissions of examples of Good Practice Programs and Responses for Sexual Assault from service providers, policy and program developers, educators and trainers, researchers and others working to address sexual violence. These can be programs, approaches or initiatives currently or recently conducted.

For more information or to contribute a program by completing the short online questionnaire, go to [www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/gpdb/goodpractice.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/gpdb/goodpractice.html) or contact ACSSA on (03) 9214 7888.

## CONFERENCES

The following conference listings are taken from the website of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

### Home Truths: Stop Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence: A National Challenge

**15–17 September 2004**

Melbourne, Vic

This three-day conference is presented by the Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA Forum) and Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic), and will provide a dynamic national forum for service providers, policy makers, academics and victim/survivors to discuss, debate and highlight practice and policy issues relating to sexual assault, and domestic and family violence. The chief sponsor of the *Home Truths* conference is the Australian Government Office of the Status of Women. Supporting sponsors are the Victorian Department of Human Services, and the Victorian Health Promotion Fund.

The conference aims to:

- *Foster* a vision for the year 2014 of the optimum service response for victim/survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence;
- *Create* partnerships between sexual assault and domestic violence sectors at both a practice and policy level in the local and national arena;
- *Highlight* examples of best practice with respect to involving victim/survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence in service and policy development;
- *Weave* the voices of victim/survivors throughout practice and policy discussions;
- *Showcase* the aims, achievements and key findings of the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault;
- *Contribute* to the ongoing feminist debates surrounding sexual assault and domestic and family violence.

*Further information* is available from the CASA Forum website at: <http://www.secasa.com.au/conference/>

### 8th International Conference of the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders

**6–9 October 2004**

Athens, Greece

The theme of this conference is “Sex Offending is Everybody’s Business”. A broad range of topics related to sexual offending will be covered, including: treatment programs and techniques; risk assessment; psychopathology; juvenile sexual offenders; legislation and ethical issues. Presentations will also cover child abuse and intimate partner sexual violence.

*Further information* is available from the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders at <http://www.iatsoathens.gr/>

### A Conference on Women, Feminism and the Law: Challenge, Change and Cha Cha Cha

**27–29 October 2004**

Brisbane, Qld

This three-day conference hosted by the Women’s Legal Service in Brisbane will focus on contemporary issues around violence against women and family law. Themes will explore: trends impacting on justice for women; key legal issues for future reform; changes in women’s interaction with the legal system over the last 20 years; politics of resistance, race and gender; mainstreaming of women’s issues and services; the effect of global trends on local issues; and re-energising and focusing for future challenges.

*Further information* is available from the Women’s Legal Service, Brisbane. Phone (07) 3392 0644 or email [jclarkin@gil.com.au](mailto:jclarkin@gil.com.au)

### Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers 23rd Annual Conference: Directing Decisions: Assessment for Disposition, Treatment, and Outcome

**27–30 October 2004**

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

This conference will provide opportunities for professional growth, networking and the dissemination of the latest research findings in the area of sexual abuse. The focus will be on assessment-driven decisions about sex offender disposition, treatment planning, predicting outcomes, organisational planning and innovative assessment and treatment procedures.

*Further information* is available from the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) at <http://www.atsa.com/conf.html>

### New Frontiers in Restorative Justice: Advancing Theory and Practice

**2–5 December 2004**

Auckland, New Zealand

This international interdisciplinary conference on restorative justice will explore how restorative justice theory and practice can develop to meet challenges such as how to define and preserve the values and standards of practice of restorative justice, and how restorative justice should operate in cases of domestic violence and sexual offending.

*Further information* is available from Massey University at <http://justpeace.massey.ac.nz/Work/Welcome.htm>

## Empirical Findings and Theory Developments in Restorative Justice: Where Are We Now?

23–25 February 2005

Canberra, ACT

This conference will be hosted by the International Network for Research on Restorative Justice and the Centre for Restorative Justice, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. The focus will be on new empirical findings in the area of restorative justice, with keynote speakers to include John Braithwaite, Lawrence Sherman, Lode Walgrave and Heather Strang. Abstracts for presentations may be sent by 15 December 2004 to Heather Strang at [heather.strang@anu.edu.au](mailto:heather.strang@anu.edu.au)

Further information is available from the Regulatory Institutions Network at <http://regnet.anu.edu.au/events/RJconf/program.htm>

## Improving Policing for Women in the Asia Pacific Region

21–24 August 2005

Darwin, NT

The improvement of policing for women in the Asia Pacific Region is the focus of this conference. Within a feminist framework, delegates from Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and Asia will explore how policing can better protect women's human rights, develop strategies to improve the number of women in key decision making positions within policing, and create a network of women that can work to improve policing for women in the Asia Pacific region.

Further information is available from the Australasian Council of Women and Policing at <http://www.auspol-women.asn.au/>

For more conferences and events visit the Conferences page on the ACSSA website: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/conferences.html>

## NEW PUBLICATION

### Making Waves: Attending to Lesbian Relationship Violence

Outline provided by *Wayward Concepts*

*Making Waves* is the first Australian publication written and produced for the lesbian community and professionals in the field of domestic violence. It is a 120-page resource manual exploring issues relating to lesbians who experience relationship abuse. It contains articles on discrimination, feminist analysis and legal rights, and includes resources on relationship abuse suitable for the lesbian community and professional service providers.

*Making Waves* is intended to stimulate and inform discussion about lesbian relationship violence: discussions that can be carried into kitchens, bedrooms, coffee shops and workplaces. It is hoped the book will also encourage existing organisations to improve access to services for lesbians experiencing relationship violence.

*Making Waves* has been written and published as a result of Lesbians Initiating Positive Strategies (LIPS) consultations with lesbians and feminists in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. LIPS has been active in raising lesbian relationship violence issues on the New South Wales North Coast for the last six years.

Kassa Bird, having previously worked with the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre in Melbourne, where she initiated the development of lesbian domestic violence resources, brought to the North Coast her commitment to continue raising awareness and developing resources for the lesbian community. LIPS evolved from these initiatives, and now offers this groundbreaking resource manual to the Australian lesbian community and women's services providers. Wayward Concepts, a feminist small publisher, is proud to assist in making this resource available.



*Making Waves* is available through *Wayward Concepts*, PO Box 2163, Byron Bay NSW 2481 at a cost of \$25 per copy for individuals and \$30 per copy for organisations (including postage and handling). Make cheques payable to *Wayward Concepts*, ABN: 54 351 363 720. For more information email: [phoenix@versa.com.au](mailto:phoenix@versa.com.au)

#### **Lesbian relationship violence training**

A training program is being offered to services by *Wayward Concepts*, to accompany the resources in the *Making Waves* manual. See the "Training" column elsewhere in this issue of *ACSSA Aware*.

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault website lists organisations that provide training in areas relating to sexual assault. These are some of the courses on offer.

## Adult sexual assault in Aboriginal communities

Examine some of the issues for Aboriginal people in relation to sexual violence, effects on victim/survivors, confidentiality in providing support, legal issues, and strategies to prevent further violence.

*Contact:* Education Centre Against Violence (NSW): Phone (02) 9840 3737 or visit [www1.health.nsw.gov.au/ecav/index.asp](http://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/ecav/index.asp)

## Alcohol and drug facilitated sexual assault

Provides a framework for understanding drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault including the legal, medical and social contexts which influence popular perspectives about this crime.

*Contact:* CASA House (Vic): phone (03) 9347 3066 or visit [www.rwh.org.au/CASA](http://www.rwh.org.au/CASA)

## Counselling women and young women who have been sexually assaulted

*Contact:* Centre Against Sexual Violence (Qld): phone (07) 3808 3299 or visit [www.connectqld.org.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=7155](http://www.connectqld.org.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=7155)

## Provision of forensic services to adults who have been raped or sexually assaulted

Outlines the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to collect and maintain evidence whilst upholding the rights and interests of adults who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

*Contact:* Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service (SA): phone (08) 8226 8777 or 1800 817 421 or visit [www.wch.sa.gov.au/yarrow/](http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/yarrow/)

## Responding to sexual assault

### Level 1

Designed to assist those working with victim/survivors of sexual assault who have not had the opportunity to access training previously. Examines the nature and consequences of sexual assault and the key issues relevant to providing an effective response, and includes information about referral options and professional support.

### Level 2

Designed to extend the skills of those who are working with victim/survivors and have some experience or have attended the Level 1 training. Considers the theoretical framework of the rights/advocacy model of responding to victim/survivors of sexual assault. Enhances skills and strategies for responding to people in crisis because of sexual assault, and examines vicarious trauma for workers.

*Contact:* CASA House (Vic): phone (03) 9347 3066 or visit [www.rwh.org.au/CASA](http://www.rwh.org.au/CASA)

## Sexuality and disability

Explores relationship and sexuality issues, and the rights and needs of people with disability.

*Contact:* Sexuality Education Counselling and Consultancy Agency (WA): phone (08) 9420 7226 or visit [www.secca.org.au/](http://www.secca.org.au/)

## Working with older women responding to past or current violence

Develop strategies to work appropriately with and increase older women's access to sexual assault and domestic violence services.

*Contact:* CASA House (Vic): phone (03) 9347 3066 or visit [www.rwh.org.au/CASA](http://www.rwh.org.au/CASA); or Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (Vic): phone (03) 9486 9866 or visit [www.dvirc.org.au](http://www.dvirc.org.au)

## Lesbian Relationship Violence Training

In conjunction with the recent launch and publication of *Making Waves: Attending to Lesbian Relationship Violence*, Wayward Concepts is able to offer services a training program to accompany the resources in the manual.

### Model 1: one-day training

This one-day workshop for professionals aims to look at the social and cultural context in which lesbians experience relationship violence; explore the similarities and differences to male violence against women; outline the specific needs of lesbian victim/survivors and current discriminative practices, and present agency options such as programs and resources addressing lesbian relationship violence.

### Model 2: half-day or sessional training

Half-day or sessional training will focus on the specific needs of lesbian victim/survivors, discuss current discriminative practices in policing and the legal system, and present options for programs and resources to improve service access for lesbians.

### Model 3: workplace-specific training sessions

Training specific to the service delivery and issues faced by individual services (for example, domestic violence court support workers or medical staff at hospital emergency units) can be designed in consultation with co-ordinators or team leaders.

*Contact:* Wayward Concepts (NSW): phone (02) 6687 2106 or visit [phoenix@versa.com.au](mailto:phoenix@versa.com.au)

For a more training courses visit [www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/training.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/training.html)

*If your organisation provides training or professional development in the area of sexual violence that you would like listed on the ACSSA website, please contact [acssa@aifs.gov.au](mailto:acssa@aifs.gov.au) with the details.*

The resources listed here comprise selections from new additions to the ACSSA library collection. They may be borrowed from the Australian Institute of Family Studies library via the interlibrary loan system.

### Adult survivors of sexual assault

**A collaborative approach to working with women who have experienced sexual violence as children**, by J. Bullen, J. Jacobs, L. Le Pont, M. Martin & C. Smith, Stepping Out Housing Program, paper presented at the NSW NGO Conference 2004 – *NGOs, Mental Health and Community: Turning the Tide*, March 2004, Sydney [NSW] Mental Health Coordinating Council, online only (PDF 56K) <http://www.mhcc.org.au/conferences/2004/papers/JaneBullen.pdf>

“Stepping Out Housing Program is a medium term supported accommodation service in south western Sydney for women (with or without dependent children) who have experienced child sexual assault and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This paper addresses the needs and experience of tenants who tell the story of being considered ‘too hard’ to work with and who have trouble locating services that respond adequately to their complex needs. Tenants and staff from Stepping Out were interviewed about their experiences of collaboration between services including mental health services, and the paper includes the voices of the those interviewed. Ideas are suggested for positive ways forward toward a better outcome.” (Abstract)

**The effects of child sexual abuse in later family life: Mental health, parenting and adjustment of offspring**, by R. Roberts, T. O’Connor, J. Dunn, J. Golding & the ALSPAC Study Team, *Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal*, vol. 28, no. 5, May 2004, pp. 525-545.

“This study examines the effects of child sexual abuse on later mental health, family functioning and parenting behaviours of the abused individual. The intergenerational transmission of adjustment problems experienced by the victim’s later children are also discussed.” (Abstract)

**Mother-daughter incest: A guide for helping professionals**, by Beverly A. Ogilvie, Binghamton, [USA] Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press, 2004.

“[This book] illuminates the rarely examined phenomenon and aftermath of mother-daughter incest, focusing on the victim’s perception of and reaction to her experience. This unique book integrates psychological theory and practical interventions with the words of the survivors themselves.” (Cover)

### Attitudes to sexual assault

**Bystander education: Bringing a broader community perspective to sexual violence prevention**, by V. Banyard, E. Plante & M. Moynihan, *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol.32, no.1, Jan. 2004, pp.61-79.

This study furthers the literature on sexual assault prevention programs by examining the psychology of the bystander and the wider community, including community norms, community change, and bystander training.

**Don’t believe the hype: Young women’s experience of male violence in the “Girl Power” era**, by J. Baker, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.27-34.

“In this article it is argued that the material reality of young women’s experience of male violence is at odds with the triumphant images of female success associated with girl power and post-feminist discourses. An analysis of the ways in which young women describe and explain dating and domestic violence is set in a context of liberal individualist ideology and masculinity politics which has implications for policy and practice.” (Journal abstract)

**Town bikes unite**, by L. Harriott, *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, no.2, 2004, pp.3-7.

“Written by a counsellor in an Australian Centre Against Sexual Assault, this paper questions the attitudes of the dominant culture to women who are sexually prolific. It also explores the links for some women between experiences of sexual assault and subsequent prolific sexual activity. By questioning the effects of dominant attitudes towards women’s sexuality and by inviting therapists and researchers to explore the meanings that women give to their own experiences of sexuality, this paper offers new challenges to the counselling field.” (Journal abstract)

**Date-rape-supporting and victim-blaming attitudes among high school students in a multiethnic society: Israel**, by G. Geiger, M. Fischer, & Y. Eshet, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.19, no.4, Apr. 2004, pp.406-426.

The attitudes of 900 Israeli secondary school students to date rape and victim blaming are examined.

Findings identified wide support for stereotypes justifying rape and blaming the victim. The need for sex education programs to address these attitudes is highlighted.

**First- and second-generation measures of sexism, rape myths and related beliefs, and hostility toward women: Their interrelationships and association with college students' experiences with dating aggression and sexual coercion**, by G. Forbes, L. Adams-Curtis & K. White, *Violence Against Women*, vol.10, no.3, Mar. 2004, pp.236-261.

This United States study examines recent developments in conceptualisation and measurement of sexist attitudes and rape-supporting beliefs and their relationship with aggressive and coercive behaviours.

**Rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity: Expected dominance versus expected arousal as mediators in acquaintance-rape situations**, by P. Chiroro, G. Bohner, G. Tendayi Viki & C. Jarvis, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.19, no.4, Apr. 2004, pp.427-442.

"Individuals who are high in rape myth acceptance (RMA) have been found to report a high proclivity to rape. In a series of three studies, the authors examined whether the relationship between RMA and self-reported rape proclivity was mediated by anticipated sexual arousal or anticipated enjoyment of sexually dominating the rape victim. Results of all three studies suggest that the anticipated enjoyment of sexual dominance mediates the relationship between RMA and rape proclivity, whereas anticipated sexual arousal does not. These findings are consistent with the feminist argument that rape and sexual violence may be motivated by men's desire to exert power over women. Theoretical and practical implications of our findings are discussed." (Journal abstract)

**Social perception of rape: How rape myth acceptance modulates the influence of situational factors**, by B. Frese, M. Moya & J. Megias, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.19, no.2, Feb. 2004, pp.143-161.

This study investigated the role of rape myth acceptance and situational factors, including stranger versus acquaintance or marital rape and drunkenness, in how people perceive the seriousness of rape and attribute blame or responsibility, using a survey of Spanish college students.

### Cultural diversity

**Culture, social discourse and domestic violence: What is the connection?** by C. Noble & C. Bettman, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.42-52.

"Men's violence against women is seen as a universal problem but there are societies in which it has been absent or infrequent. By focusing on a number of non-Western or indigenous societies, where domestic violence is not prevalent or is rare, this article seeks to investigate the influence of culture on domestic violence. It suggests that each culture has a body of information and knowledge about male violence according to the discourses it accepts and makes function as true, which determines the behavioural choices of its members and the way power and privilege are manifested. It concludes that further work which explores the interface of culture and social discourse is necessary to ensure that the spotlight remains on male violence and that the community at large collectively explores the way male violence is discussed and defined as a cultural and social discourse." (Journal abstract)

### Feminist theory

**Managing violence? Feminist management practice in a domestic violence service**, by A. Bartlett, R. Campbell & L. Whitaker, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.35-41.

"Domestic violence organisations have been drawing on feminist approaches to management for almost 30 years now, yet the processes of managing seem fraught and women come out of committees feeling traumatised and burnt out. In this article, the authors draw on their professional domains of knowledge to reflect on their experiences as volunteer management committee members of a domestic violence service and try to articulate why such a motivated and visionary feminist practice might be so difficult to implement." (Journal abstract, edited)

### Homeless young people

**Involuntary sex experienced by homeless young people: A public health problem**, by D. Rosenthal & S. Mallett, *Psychological Reports*, vol.93, no.3, Dec 2003, pp.1195-1196.

There is a higher incidence of young homeless people being exposed to adverse sexual health outcomes and in particular, more sexual assault. This survey of homeless young people in Melbourne found that the incidence of involuntary sex was higher than in the general adolescent population. The authors argue that there is a need for programs to provide this group with the ability to avoid unwanted sex.

### Incidence and trends

**The epidemiology of female rape victims who seek immediate medical care: Temporal trends in the incidence of sexual assault and acquaintance**

**rape**, by D. Magid, D. Houry, T. Koepsell, A. Ziller, M. Soules & C. Jenny, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.19, no.1, Jan. 2004, pp.3-12.

This study investigates sexual assault trends, incidence and characteristics by comparing the reports of female sexual assault victims presenting to a US emergency department in 1991 with 1974.

### Intimate partner and acquaintance sexual assault

**Just “keeping the peace”: A reluctance to respond to male partner sexual violence**, by M. Heenan, *Issues*, Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, no.1, Mar 2004, 1-39.

Two decades ago in most Australian states and territories, rape in marriage was not a crime. Legislation now addresses this issue, and this paper explores whether the social and legal responses to sexual violence perpetrated by men against their female partners has changed. Five key areas are discussed: the historical development of the law and legal treatment relating to male partner rape; the current status of research into intimate partner sexual violence and gaps that exist; difficulties faced by women in recognising and disclosing their experience of male partner rape; the impact of male partner sexual violence on women’s physical and emotional health; and the reluctance of support services to respond specifically to male partner rape.

**Wife rape: Understanding the response of survivors and service providers**, by R. Bergen, Thousand Oaks [USA] Sage Publications, 1996.

“[This book] lends voice to the personal testimonies of survivors and contrasts these stories with interviews of service providers, illustrating the lack of validation and insufficient assistance currently available to wife rape survivors. Offering insight and hope to survivors and providing critical information to service providers, this valuable volume helps readers better understand wife rape and the response of agencies to the problem.” (Cover)

**Intimate betrayal: Understanding and responding to the trauma of acquaintance rape**, by V. Wiehe & A. Richards. Thousand Oaks [USA], Sage Publications, 1995.

“This book informs and educates about the nature of acquaintance rape and its impact on the victim, intervention, and prevention. The chapters on intervention include material on crisis intervention, tools for effective rape counseling, and strategies for meeting the psychosocial needs of survivors who are facing long-term recovery due to previous sexual assault victimisation. The authors also offer a special chapter on marital rape to expose this long-denied and insidious form of rape. In addition, a useful review of current literature pinpoints interventions crucial to rape prevention.” (Publisher website, edited)

### Intimate partner and family violence

**Measuring the tides of violence: current family violence data for the western region of Melbourne**, Footscray [Vic.] Women’s Health West, 2003.

This research report examines the incidence of intimate partner violence against women in the Western Region of Melbourne, including the region’s demographics, data from police and crisis services, and disadvantaged groups. Extracts from presentations from the Rising Tides of Violence forum are included as appendices.

**The effects of arrest on intimate partner violence: New evidence from the Spouse Assault Replication Program**, by C. Maxwell, J. Garner & J. Fagan, Washington DC, National Institute of Justice, 2001, <http://www.ncjrs.org/AlphaTitles.html#E>

Discusses an analysis of 4,032 incidents, across five jurisdictions, in which males assaulted their intimate female partners, comparing the number of repeat offences when batterers are and are not arrested. The five jurisdictions are included in the Spouse Assault Replication Program sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. The analysis was cosponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Intimate partner violence surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements**, by L. Saltzman, et al, Atlanta [USA] Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2002, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pubs.htm>

This document is intended for voluntary use by individuals and organisations in the United States interested in gathering surveillance data on intimate partner violence (IPV). Its aim is to promote and improve consistency of IPV surveillance, thereby enabling better estimation of the incidence and prevalence of IPV and overcoming problems of data incompatibility and the high costs of collecting, linking and using data.

### Legal procedures

**Do trials of perpetrators re-traumatise crime victims?**, by U. Orth & A. Mearcker, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.19, no.2, Feb 2004, pp.212-227.

This study investigated whether attendance at court trials has a retraumatizing effect on victims, leading to an increase in the post traumatic stress symptoms caused by the original crime, using a survey of German victims of violent crimes, including rape victims.

**The self-confessed perpetrator and the Australian legal system that sanctioned the crime**, by “Debra”, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.53-61.

The author of this article gives a detailed account of her experience of the legal system as a victim/survivor of sexual assault. She describes the actions and attitudes of the police and legal system from the time the rape was reported through to an eventual trial and finally the outcome of an Ombudsman's investigation of her complaint about the handling of her case. This experience left the author feeling that she did not achieve justice, and that this case is just one example of how the legal system in Australia fails to treat rape and sexual assault as a serious crime.

**Sexual assault, criminal justice and law and order**, by J. Stubbs, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.14-26.

"This article engages with questions about the role of the criminal justice system in responding to sexual assault. The author demonstrates the limitations of policies based on deterrence and sentencing, by reference to statistics on the processing (or not) of reported sexual offences in New South Wales. She also challenges the assumption that punitive policies allied with law and order rhetoric provide improved safety for women." (Journal abstract)

**Sexual offences: The new law**, by R. Card, Bristol [UK], Jordan Publishing, 2004.

"Sexual Offences - The New Law is an authoritative guide to the new [Sexual Offences Act 2003], as it applies to England and Wales. In addition to detailed explanatory commentary on the new law, the text of the Act is included." (Cover)

### Mother blaming

**Mother blaming: A covert practice in therapeutic intervention**, by J. Allan, *Australian Social Work*, vol.57, no.1. Mar 2004, pp.57-70.

"This article discusses the continuing discursive support for idealised motherhood, describes some ways mother blaming is practiced within therapeutic intervention and discusses the implications of this for social work practice. The article is based on a qualitative study of professionals who provide therapeutic intervention for sexually violent children and their families. The case examples discussed come from this study and describe the roles attributed to mothers in causing and maintaining their children's sexual violence." (Journal abstract)

### Offenders

**The police perspective on sex offender orders: A preliminary review of policy and practice**, by K. Knock, London, Home Office, Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, 2002.

Sex Offender Orders (SOOs) were introduced in Great Britain under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and can be applied to prohibit convicted or cautioned sex

offenders from engaging in behaviours known to have led to the commission of offences in the past. In this way SOOs are intended to help prevent further offences from occurring. This report provides an overview of their use by police in England and Wales from their inception on 1 December 1998 up to 31 March 2001.

**Predicting reconvictions for sexual and violent offences using the revised offender group reconviction scale**, by R. Taylor, London, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 1999, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/rf1999.html>

"The Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS) predicts the probability that an offender will be reconvicted within two years of release from prison or from the start of a community penalty for any standard list offence. A revised version of OGRS is now used, which also predicts reconvictions for sexual and violent offences. These findings examine the advantages and limitations of the revised OGRS, particularly in relation to predicting sexual and violent reconvictions." (Website)

### Policy

**Report of the Task Force on Sexual Assault and Rape in Tasmania**, Hobart, Women Tasmania, 1998, <http://www.women.tas.gov.au/resources/reports/index.html>

The Task Force on Sexual Assault and Rape was established by the Tasmanian government in 1995 to review the whole-of-system response to sexual assault and rape, and was convened and chaired by the Office of the Status of Women (subsequently Women Tasmania). The policy emphasis of the Task Force Report is that sexual assault is a crime and must therefore be aligned with the crime prevention responsibilities of government. The strategy developed by the Task Force is intended to: enable the government and community to work together to change public attitudes to sexual assault; provide a less traumatic process in the courts; ensure consistent condemnation of the proven offender; and provide an adequate level of support for the victim.

### Political attitudes

**Interview with Natasha Stott Despoja: Political dimensions of violence against women**, by A. Neame, *Aware*, Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault Newsletter no.3 Feb 2004, 3-5.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja is the Australian Democrat's Spokesperson for the Status of Women, and in this role she spoke to the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault about the political significance of violence against women in Australia. In this edited transcript of the interview, Senator

Stott Despoja gives her perspectives on violence against women, and in particular sexual violence, as a political issue and a public concern, and its connections with other issues of women's inequality.

### Pornography

**When words are not enough: The search for the effect of pornography on abused women**, by J. Hinson Shope, *Violence Against Women*, vol.10, no.1. Jan. 2004, pp.56-72.

This study investigated the use of pornography as a factor in increasing the probability that a woman will be sexually, as well as physically abused, by her partner. It found that the combination of alcohol and pornography increased the odds of sexual abuse.

### Rural issues

**Unspoken crimes: Sexual assault in rural America**, by S. Lewis, Enola [USA] National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2003, [http://www.nsvrc.org/rural\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/rural_booklet.pdf)

"This booklet examines sexual assault from a rural perspective. Its goal is to present service providers with a better sense of the unique characteristics that are so often a part of rural regions. It considers the issue of prevalence of rural sexual assault by examining national data as well as information from several states." (p.1)

### Self defense training

**"I can take care of myself": The impact of self-defense training on women's lives**, by J. Hollander, *Violence Against Women*, vol.10, no.3, Mar. 2004, pp.205-235.

The author provides evidence from a longitudinal study of women's self-defense training that shows that it reduces risk of sexual assault and has other important life-enhancing effects.

**Sexual assault of women: Prevention efforts and risk factors**, by I. Sochting, N. Fairbrother & W. Koch, *Violence Against Women*, vol.10, no.1, Jan. 2004, pp.73-93.

Authors provide a meta-evaluation of sexual assault programs, and conclude that the most promising avenue seems to be self-defense training. Research on risk factors is also reviewed, and it is suggested that existing programs could benefit from focusing on these factors.

### Sexual exploitation

**Girls' sexual development in the inner city: From compelled childhood sexual contact to sex-for-things exchanges**, by E. Dunlap, A. Golub & B. Johnson, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, vol.12, no.2, 2004, pp.73-96.

The sexual development of adolescent girls in the inner city of New York is described in this paper. Many of the girls follow a developmental pathway that leads from being compelled to have sex to engaging in sex-for-things exchanges in adulthood. The mechanics of this process and how it is sustained are discussed.

**The psychological impact of sexual slavery of trafficked women: Parallels with torture, sexual abuse and domestic violence**, by F. Rousseaux, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.4-13.

This article explores the psychological impact of trauma on women and children who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual slavery. It explores some themes of the traumatic experience relevant to this group by examining parallels between victims of sex-trafficking and survivors of torture, sexual abuse and domestic violence. The applicability of our current knowledge-bases in these fields is demonstrated. Some suggestions for future service provision and development are made. (Journal abstract)

**Sex work and "date" violence**, by S. Kurtz, H. Surratt, J. Inciardi & M. Kiley, *Violence Against Women*, vol.10, no.4, Apr. 2004, pp.357—385.

This study explores the issue of sex workers who are victimised by their clients or "dates". Risk factors associated with sex work and "date" violence are examined. Recommendations for a harm-reduction approach to outreach and educational programs for sex workers are included.

**Violence in the sex trade industry**, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 10, no. 2 Feb. 2004 Special issue

"This group of articles provides a counterweight to a remarkable phenomenon: the minimisation of the violence in the indoor sex industry and other mythologies about the sex trade industry involving pimps and customers. As money has been more readily available from the public health and drug addiction sector to study women in the streets, funding has clearly played a part in the general lack of information about women in indoor sex venues. Common is the assertion that indoor prostitution represents a transaction between consenting adults that does not warrant the state's concern or regulation. Although this statement accords with desires for non-interference with individual sexual behaviours and preferences, it is one that ignores the more pernicious aspects of prostitution despite the venue: violence against women." (Editor's introduction)

### Sexual harassment

**Taking it seriously: Contemporary experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace: WASH (Working Against Sexual Harassment) research project 2003/2004**, by P. Hayes, Carlton [Vic.] CASA

House, Royal Women's Hospital, 2004, [http://www.rwh.org.au/casa/index.cfm?doc\\_id=4652](http://www.rwh.org.au/casa/index.cfm?doc_id=4652)

A report comprised of interviews, case studies, and a survey of some 200 workers, which includes the experiences of people who have been sexually harassed in the Victorian workplace since 1999 and who did not report it under either federal or state legislation. The purpose is to assess the current situation and to develop strategies for change. (reviewed in this edition, p. 3)

**Working for women's safety**, by G. Beecher, *Women Against Violence - An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.14, Jul 2003, pp.71-73.

This article discusses the need to put workplace sexual harassment on the agenda of governments, businesses and communities. The objectives and philosophy of Working Against Sexual Harassment (WASH) are described, a group that works towards the elimination of sexual harassment through raising public awareness, working with organisations and conducting research.

#### Telephone counselling

**A best practice manual for specialised sexual assault crisis telephone counselling**, by F. Rummery, Drummoyne, NSW, NSW Rape Crisis Centre, 2003.

This manual is a guide designed to assist workers at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre in their work to provide telephone crisis counselling to women who have experienced sexual violence. The manual attempts to standardise the approach taken by counsellors in assessing and managing those seeking assistance through the Rape Crisis Centre, and draws on the knowledge and experience of the counsellors as well as other associated health professionals. The guide covers: initial stages of contact; ongoing contact and case management; crisis intervention; risk assessment procedures; and general issues for survivors of sexual violence.

#### Violence against women

**Toolkit to end violence against women**, National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women and the Violence Against Women Office, Washington DC, National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women, 2001, <http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/>

The National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women developed this Toolkit to provide concrete guidance to communities, policy leaders and individuals engaged in activities to end violence against women. The website contains 16 chapters on different subjects, each of which includes a summary, a full download option and links to other relevant resources.

#### Special rural issue

## Women Against Violence journal

It is six years since *Women Against Violence – an Australian feminist journal* published the first rural issue. In that time, women outside the major cities have continued to experience violence; researchers have continued to build knowledge in this field and rural practitioners across the country have continued to work against violence in innovative ways.

Issue no. 15 will once again feature articles, briefings and news from rural Australia. It will tackle important questions facing rural women and rural services, including:

- *What does it mean to be a rural woman in Australia?*
- *What is meant by a rural culture?*
- *What barriers do women in rural areas face when disclosing their experiences of violence to authorities?*

Importantly, researchers and practitioners keep returning to the stories told by the women who are victim/survivors of violence, and we are very fortunate to have a powerful and inspiring survivor account in this issue. We hope that this issue of *Women Against Violence* will inspire women in rural and urban Australia, and internationally, to continue working against violence.

For more information or to subscribe, visit our website at [www.rwh.org.au/casa/](http://www.rwh.org.au/casa/) and click on to Women Against Violence Journal.

**Prevalence, incidence, and consequences of violence against women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey**, by P. Godeke Tjaden & N. Thoennes, Washington DC, National Institute of Justice, 2000, <http://www.ncjrs.org/AlphaTitles.html#P>

This report presents findings on the prevalence and incidence of rape, physical assault, and stalking, the rate of injury among rape and physical assault victims, and injured victims' use of medical devices. Findings are based on the National Violence Against Women Survey jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and indicate that violence is more widespread and more injurious to women's and men's health than previously thought.

**Family violence, anger expression styles, and adolescent dating violence**, by K. Wolf, & V. Foshee, *Journal of Family Violence*, vol. 18, no. 6 Dec. 2003, pp. 309-316.

This study examined the relationship between witnessing or experiencing family violence and later perpetration of dating violence by adolescents, including the mediating affect of anger expression, based on a survey of US young teenagers on their family history, aggressive behaviour during dates, and their constructive, destructive and indirect styles of anger.

### Young people

**Intervention with sexually abusive young people in Australia and New Zealand**, by K. Flanagan, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, vol.9, no.2, Nov 2003, pp.135-149.

This article presents the results of an audit across Australia and New Zealand on services providing therapeutic intervention with adolescents engaging in sexually abusive behaviours. The study includes information on the types of clients accepted and the therapeutic models used. Issues and recommendations based on the review of services are discussed, including the identification of specific gaps in service delivery and the need for timely access to programs.

**Students as bystanders to sexual coercion: How would they react and why?** by K. Rigby & B. Johnson, *Youth Studies Australia*, vol.23, no.2, June 2004, pp.11-16.

"More than half of 200 Year 8 and 9 students who watched a video showing a girl being sexually coerced by a boy in the presence of student bystanders reported that such events occurred regularly at their Australian school. When asked how

they would respond as bystanders, just over half said they would directly object to the boy's action, and nearly a fifth said they would seek help for the girl from a teacher. However, a quarter of the students said they would ignore what was happening and one in 40 said they would support the boy. Analysis of the results indicated that students' attitude to victims, but not their gender, predicted the likelihood that they would express a readiness to help the girl. These findings, as provided in this article, suggest that promoting more caring attitudes in students towards the victims of peer abuse will encourage positive interventive action by both boy and girl bystanders in cases of sexual harassment at school." (Journal abstract)

**Multiple sexual victimisations among adolescent boys and girls: Prevalence and associations with eating behaviours and psychological health**, by D. Ackard & D. Neumark-Sztainer, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, vol. 12, no. 1 2003, pp. 17-37.

This study examined the relationship between child sexual abuse, eating disorders and mental health. Sexual abuse was associated with eating disorders and a variety of mental health problems. Victims of multiple sexual abuse situations were most likely to resort to unhealthy eating behaviors.

**Differences in trauma symptoms and family functioning in intra- and extrafamilial sexually abused adolescents**, by S. Bal, I. De Bourdeaudhuij, G. Crombez, & P. Van Oost, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 19 no. 1 Jan. 2004, pp. 101-123.

This study investigated whether abuse-related symptoms and family functioning were associated with intra- or extrafamilial sexual abuse of adolescents. Findings indicated no difference in the abuse-related symptoms between the two groups. Lack of family cohesion, however, was found to contribute to internalising trauma-related problems.

**Predictors of maternal support: The point of view of adolescent victims of sexual abuse and their mothers**, by M. Cyr, J. Wright, J. Toupin, J. Oxman-Martinez, P. McDuff & C. Theriault, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, pp. 39-65.

Maternal support is an important factor in recovery from child sexual abuse. This study collected information from both abuse victims and their mothers. Five significant predictors of maternal support were identified in each data set, four were common to both. These findings highlight the need to consider both the victim's and their mother's perceptions of the victim's post-disclosure functioning and later adjustment. ■



**Briefing Paper 3**

In its third Briefing Paper, ACSSA examines issues relating to sexual assault in rural and remote communities. Some of the areas discussed include: prevalence figures, reporting patterns, barriers to disclosure, service delivery challenges and innovations, and criminal justice responses. The paper shows that while many of the problems faced by rural communities in responding to sexual assault mirrored those that confront victim/survivors and service providers who live in cities, issues of isolation, the levels of rural conservatism and the denial of sexual assault within rural communities remain distinct. Rural women continue to suffer the impact of sexual assault in ways that uniquely compromise their capacity to remain anonymous, their right to access culturally appropriate services, and their right to seek a police and/or legal response.

**Briefing Paper 4**

ACSSA's fourth Briefing Paper looks at family violence and sexual assault in Indigenous communities. It provides a brief overview of state and federal policies on Indigenous family violence and reviews a number of relevant documents on sexual assault. The Briefing Paper also provides a literature review and contains "snapshot" interviews with a number of Indigenous sexual assault service providers about the developments that are happening in their communities to address sexual assault.

**Contribute to ACSSA Aware**

Service providers, researchers and those interested in working against sexual assault are encouraged to contribute to the ACSSA Aware newsletter. We are interested in short reviews (no more than 1500 words) of books, conferences, workshops and projects. We will also consider more substantial articles (no more than 3000 words) on significant issues in understanding, responding to, or preventing sexual assault.

ACSSA Aware aims to provide a lively forum for ideas, argument and comment: thus we welcome readers' letters, comments and feedback on issues discussed in ACSSA publications.

Please email contributions in a Microsoft Word document to [acssa@aifs.gov.au](mailto:acssa@aifs.gov.au), or post to the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.

**We welcome your feedback**

**Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault**

Help to shape the work of the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. We are interested in hearing your views on the best way to meet the needs of our stakeholders. If you have any comments on services that could be offered, or possible topics for publications or areas of research, please fill in the section below and return it to the Institute. Comments can also be provided on-line via the ACSSA website [www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/), or email us at [acssa@aifs.gov.au](mailto:acssa@aifs.gov.au)

**What other services would you find useful for your work?**

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**What topics would you liked covered in ACSSA's publications, or considered for research projects?**

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Membership form overleaf ►

# ACSSA Services

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is funded by the Australian Government Office of the Status of Women, under the *National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault*. ACSSA provides stakeholders with a variety of services (see below). ACSSA is located at the Australian Institute of Family Studies in Melbourne.

## Resources

ACSSA is building a collection of publications and best practice literature, reports, and training resources to inform initiatives and programs directed at improving the understanding of, and response to, sexual assault. These materials are available for browsing at the Australian Institute of Family Studies Information Centre, or may be borrowed through the interlibrary loan system. Bibliographic information on these resources may be searched online via the Institute's catalogue.

## Advisory service

ACSSA's research staff can provide specialist advice and information, including detailed analysis and interpretation of current issues that impact on the response to sexual assault. Email research queries to [acssa@aifs.gov.au](mailto:acssa@aifs.gov.au)

## Policy advice

ACSSA offers policy advice to the Australian Government and other government agencies on matters relating to sexual assault, intervention and pathways to prevention.

## Publications

ACSSA produces Issues Papers, Briefing Papers and Newsletters which are mailed free of charge to members of the mailing list. Publications can also be received electronically.

## Good practice database

ACSSA is developing a *Good Practice* database, to document and publicise best practice projects and activities being undertaken in relation to sexual assault.

## Research

ACSSA staff undertake primary and secondary research projects, commissioned by Government or non-government agencies.

## Email alert and discussion lists

*ACSSA-Alert* and *ACSSA-Discuss* keep members posted on what's new at the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault and in the sexual assault field generally, and allow networking and communication among those working on issues related to sexual violence against women.

# Membership form

## Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

← Details overleaf

If you would like to join the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault mailing list, please fill in this form and return it to the Institute. Membership of the Centre is free.

- Please add my name to your mailing list to receive ACSSA publications  I would like to receive publications electronically  
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