



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.

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## Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

RESEARCH COLLECTION and  
LIBRARY SERVICES

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault is developing a comprehensive collection of Australian and international resources on sexual assault research, service responses, and prevention theory. All kinds of materials form part of the collection, but with particular emphasis on books (including "classic" texts), periodicals, newsletters and electronic resources.

### How to access ACSSA resources

#### ■ In person

Visit the Australian Institute of Family Studies library in person by making an appointment with library staff between 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. Visitors can use the reference collection directly, or surf the online catalogue to search for relevant resources and references. Photocopying is also available (20c per page). The library is located at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000

#### ■ Online catalogue search

You can do a catalogue search online, via the Australian Institute of Family Studies website. The catalogue can be accessed from the Information and Resources link on the Australian Institute of Family Studies homepage, at [www.aifs.gov.au/](http://www.aifs.gov.au/)

#### ■ Inter library loan

Requests for loans and photocopies of material from the Australian Institute of Family Studies library can be made via your local library. Procedures and charges established by the Australian Inter-lending Code apply. For copyright reasons, photocopies cannot be provided by ACSSA directly.

#### ■ Help desk

A help desk is staffed during office hours to assist you in finding the best resources for your enquiry. The Institute's library staff undertake literature searches in nominated areas, and provide a comprehensive list of resources available online and from the Institute's library.

#### ■ Further information

Contact the Institute's help desk: Phone: (03) 9214 7871  
Fax: (03) 9214 7839 Email: [fic@aifs.gov.au](mailto:fic@aifs.gov.au)

## Women's Safety Awards 2004

The Women's Safety Awards 2004, hosted by Women in Cities International, aims to elicit information on good practices relating to women's safety and municipal gender-based policies in crime prevention. The awards also seek to promote local initiatives that include significant elements relating to women's safety, and to build the capacity of local groups to develop projects and practices relating to women's safety and the improvement of women's sense of safety.

Up to ten Canadian and ten international initiatives will be awarded in each of the following categories:

## Political dimensions of violence against women



Senator Natasha Stott Despoja joined the Senate in 1995 as the youngest woman to enter Federal Parliament. Her current portfolios include Higher Education, Work and Family, Foreign Affairs, and Science and Biotechnology, and she is the Australian Democrats spokesperson for the Status of Women.

Senator Stott Despoja spoke to ACSSA researcher *Alexandra Neame* about her perspectives on violence against women and its political significance in Australia today. This is an edited transcript of that interview.

**ACSSA:** Is it your impression that violence against women is a political issue at the moment? Is it high on the political agenda?

**NSD:** Undoubtedly it's a political issue. But I'm not sure if violence against women is necessarily a political priority. I think in terms of policy priorities it's not necessarily reflected in budget allocations, nor is it reflected in the commitment of high-level politicians – ministers, senior ministers and the executive – to identify it as an issue. So, I think it's always a big issue, but it's not necessarily as high a priority as it should be.

**ACSSA:** If violence against women is not given sufficient political priority, is this merely reflective of public sentiment? In other words, do you think violence against women is a public concern?

**NSD:** It's an interesting question, because I've no doubt that violence, and violence against women and children in particular, is an incredibly important issue to the public. And it's something that the public cares about for very understandable reasons. Women are dealing with assault and battery in their homes on a daily basis – of course it is an important issue. How that translates, though, from a private political concern to a public issue of debate, and then to a public issue that receives a response and action ... that's where the difficulty is.

There's no question that the issue of violence against women remains taboo to a degree still. We talk about it more, we have programs, and funds allocated to it, but there is still an extent to which we as a society don't really address it. And the way ►

- advocacy, networking and community mobilisation;
- capacity-building and training;
- educational programs and public awareness;
- safety planning and design for public spaces; and
- municipal gender-based policies in crime prevention and community safety.

Good practices and policies will be announced at a press conference, results will be published on the *Femmes et villes/Women in Cities International* website (which is linked to other relevant websites), and information will be disseminated through

list-servs and newsletters. A publication documenting results of the competition will also be distributed to community groups, municipal governments and other relevant bodies.

The Women's Safety Awards 2004 follow on from the First International Seminar on Women's Safety, held in Montreal from 9-11 May 2002. At that event, participants from all five continents shared their expertise, experience and knowledge in this field. You can now access the seminar proceeding and the Montreal Declaration on Women's Safety on

[www.femmesetvilles.org](http://www.femmesetvilles.org)