



NSW Rape Crisis Centre Annual Report 2005

We will work until we achieve a society free of violence

**Born of the women's liberation movement,
committed to the human right of women to live free of violence,
determined to make a difference.**

Public Support

Sexual assault is increasingly an issue of public concern. This increased awareness has led to individuals and groups contacting the NSW Rape Crisis Centre offering their help. For some, this has been in the form of moral support for our work, others have offered labor time or wanted to be involved in advocacy activities, while others have offered to organise fund raisers with the proceeds to come to the Centre.

In February this year, as part of an international V Day campaign aimed at eliminating violence against women, a group of high profile and talented women produced and presented the play 'The Vagina Monologues' at the Sydney Opera House. The night was a great success. All performers gave their time free of charge and the depth of their talent was well and truly displayed.

During November 2004 the Dancers of the Sydney Showboat organised a benefit cruise.

They invited a number of high profile people such as Steve Waugh, Paul Roos and Human Nature. The women organised a range of memorabilia for auction and the food and show was enjoyed by all.

Both events resulted in considerable donations to the Centre which were used to develop Rape Crisis Online.

The Media

Over the past year the NSW Rape Crisis Centre has been approached by all sections of the media to respond to current and background issues in relation to sexual assault.

Contact has been made with all Sydney and a number of regional TV news and current affairs programs, Sydney and rural newspapers, many magazines and a wide cross section of radio. Some of whom have been quite famous and not necessarily known for their favourable response to women's rights.

The vast majority have been respectful of the issue and have asked questions which allowed the Centre to respond in an informative way. Television, and especially news

programs, have offered the Centre a high level of visibility which in turn increases the confidence of women who are considering contacting our service.

One TV appearance of 15 to 20 seconds, can lead to 12 to 15 radio interviews. It is in this medium that quality information, rebuttal of myths and debate on issues can be developed.

While the media has not taken a radical feminist stand on sexual assault matters and there are still examples of 'unhelpful' reporting, there has been a phenomenal increase in media attention to this terrible crime. The reporting has generally been supportive of victims, condemning of perpetrators and vocal in support of criminal justice system reform.

The Counselling Service

Counsellors at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre constantly work to review and improve their practices.

Most callers will ring two to three times and then access services in their local area. For some, further assistance is not required. For others, commonly those who have complex trauma histories, which may include child sexual assault and further sexual violence as an adult, extensive support is recommended over a longer period of time.

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre is a crisis service only. While telephone and online services are crucial for crisis intervention and increasing access to other services, medium to long term therapeutic assistance is best provided face to face. For callers who have a history of violence and trauma, as opposed to experiencing recent violence, access to face to face services can be difficult. Such callers often fall outside the criteria of face to face services or the service waiting lists are impossibly long.

Counsellors at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre have developed a number of assessment tools to identify these callers and work very quickly to negotiate a case management plan. The plan includes a number of crucial goals to be achieved in subsequent calls as well as agreements about the number and content of calls. The plans always contain safety plans and the development of strategies to manage the impacts of trauma such as: nightmares, anxiety, fears, phobias and suicidality. Where the caller continues to be at risk of further assaults, immediate physical safety always takes precedence.

If the caller already has access to face to face services counsellors will, with the callers' permission and in a three way process, make contact with the face to face counsellor so that the Centre's telephone work can back-up and support face to face work.

For someone whose life has been dislocated by a series of violent and brutal attacks, recovery is difficult and fraught with pain. Our service works hard to assist such callers on their journey. Those who recover, and most do, are women to be admired for their bravery and courage and honored for their perseverance and fortitude.

Rape Crisis Online

It is official. After three years of solid campaigning Rape Crisis Online will go online in December 2005.

Rape Crisis Online is a person to person, online, real time, information and support service for anyone who has been sexually assaulted. The project will particularly target young people who feel very comfortable in an online environment and who, research shows, use the internet, as their first point of health information, in 70% of instances.

Many who have been sexually assaulted say that the most difficult thing after the assault is telling what has happened for the first time. The advantages of 'online' as the first point of contact include: 1) being able to access online help from the privacy of the bedroom or other quiet location in a home, as opposed to the kitchen or lounge where the telephone is usually located, 2) being able to type the words rather than the more difficult speaking the story, 3) being able to access instant support and information backed up by a website of information.

Rape Crisis Online is an alternate point of contact for access to the NSW Rape Crisis Centre and other sexual counselling and support services. Those who make online contact will be encouraged to ring the Centre after the initial one or two online contacts so that more in-depth information and support can be offered.

In research to establish the feasibility of the service, over 80% of those who responded indicated that they would be more likely to make online contact rather than telephone contact and 30% said that they would not make contact at all if online contact was not available. Given that about 80% of victims of sexual assault never report what has happened to them, the increased access to services and support offered by Rape Crisis Online will ensure that more women who are sexually assaulted can access quality professional help and be supported and resourced toward recovery .

\$220,000 has been raised to make the project happen. \$170,000 came from the NSW State Government with the majority coming from NSW Health. The balance was granted and donated from a range of sources including the NSW Law and Justice Foundation, the NRL, Canterbury Bankstown RLFC, Marrickville RSL and other individuals and groups.

The project will pilot for two years and then be evaluated. Recurrent funding will be dependent on Rape Crisis Online showing that it has increased the number of people accessing support after being sexually assaulted.

Website

In 2004/05 the NSW Rape Crisis Centre website recorded 424,828 hits.

The website has proved to be an extremely effective tool in the Centre's aim of increasing access to services, informing people about sexual assault and promoting attitudinal change.

Regular updates are added to the website's wealth of information including: articles, project information and statistic updates. The list of fact sheets is often revised and increased.

Centre Operations

The telephone counselling service and the projects and activities which are summarised in this report, are the public face and core work of the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. Underpinning, resourcing and supporting this work is the Centre's physical and operational infrastructure.

Over the past twelve months the Centre has: reviewed the Counselling handbook; completed the OH&S policy, procedures and risk analysis; trained a number of workers to fulfill the role of OH&S committee members; and developed quality assurance procedures for the counselling service.

All computers have been upgraded, in part to ensure the operation of Rape Crisis Online, but also to allow for the Centre to operate on advanced, reliable and fast technology. The Centre has invested in a colour printer which is used for Centre newsletters, promotional material and training handouts.

A review of the industrial agreement has ensured that the wages and conditions workers and Centre management have negotiated will continue to be registered and protected.

The Centre premises have been upgraded by the owners, the NSW Department of Housing, and as workers have identified OH&S hazards, safe and appropriate responses have resulted.

Research Partnership

The Australian Research Council has provided \$400,872 over three years to the University of Western Sydney in partnership with the NSW Rape Crisis Centre to promote ethical non-violent relationships of young women and men. Associate Professor Moira Carmody will lead the research.

The research will contribute to the prevention of sexual violence between young women and men aged 16-25 years and to promote their ability to live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives. It will develop an evaluated educational training program based on young peoples experiences of sexual intimacy, sexuality and anti-violence education. The project will deliver a training program in three rural and three metropolitan sites with follow up interviews with participants six months after completion of the course.

The research will provide information on how young women and men negotiate intimate relationships and the impact of training on their ability to avoid abusive or violent relationships.

The findings of the research will inform policy makers, educators and community organisations working with young women and men.

National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence

NASASV is the unfunded peak body of sexual assault services across Australia. It provides support and networking for services and lobbies and advocates, at a national level, on sexual assault matters. Communication is maintained via a very active email list and an annual conference.

Many NASASV projects target the federal government such as the "Australia Says NO" campaign.

In particular NASASV raised concerns about the campaign directing women, who had experienced sexual violence, to a volunteer referral service.

It is well documented that the experience someone has when they first report sexual assault greatly influences their willingness to seek further help. NASASV was very

concerned that callers would not get the experienced professional response that Association services offer. The work of NASASV has resulted in Lifeline, the referral line operators, agreeing to meet with NASASV representatives to discuss the establishment of a national 1800 sexual assault line.

Churchill

In 2005 the Churchill Fellowship sponsored the Centre Manager, Karen Willis, to travel to South Africa, the USA and Canada to review the management of complaints of sexual assault in the criminal justice systems in those countries and support services for victims.

Her findings can be summarised into three simple best practice directions: 1) Specialisation: in every instance where Police, Prosecutors or Courts specialised dramatic improvements resulted; 2) Co-ordination: where there is seamless movement between departments and roles, and where the complainant is fully informed, the level of satisfaction, even when a conviction is not achieved, improves dramatically; and 3) Leadership: development of a culture of commitment and passion for the work.

NRL

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre has continued to work with the University of Sydney and the NRL to change the attitude and behaviour of footballers towards women and to improve rugby league response to complaints of sexual assault.

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre provided input into the development of protocols for assisting someone who makes a complaint of sexual assault to a Club or the NRL. The Centre then trained club members, who normally attend away games with players, in the implementation of the protocols. The training covered causes, consequences and impacts, sexual assault myths and detailed how the protocols were to be put into practice.

Sex Offences Task Force

As a result of systemic advocacy on behalf of a wide range of individuals and organisations the NSW Attorney General established the Criminal Justice Sex Offences Task Force in December 2004. The task force was charged with: evaluating alternative models for the prosecution of sex offences, evaluating proposals for legislative and procedural change in the area of sexual assault prosecutions in NSW, and identification of areas of possible reform in relation to the provision of services for sexual assault victims. Twenty five individuals representing a wide range of interests in relation to sexual assault were invited to be members of the task force. The task force is due to report to the Attorney General in December of this year.

With such a diverse range of views represented, the task force has struggled to develop consensus recommendations and has on many occasions agreed that the report may state the range of opinion rather than offer concrete direction. There are concerns that such a divergence of views will result in little resolution in relation to improvements to the management of complaints of sexual assault in NSW.

There is a groundswell of community interest in improving the complaints process for victims of sexual assault and increasing the conviction rate of sex offenders.

Perhaps this community interest will result in a consolidation of recommendations that has not, at times, seemed possible at the task force level.

Statistics

New Callers	1334
Repeat Callers	1593
TOTAL CALLERS	2927

Most common presenting issue

Sexual Assault	685
Child Sex. Assault	334
Gang Rape	59
Drug & Assaulted	36

Age

0 to 15	91
16 to 25	436
26 to 45	622
46 +	185

When assault occurred

Last 7 days	348
8 days – 6 months	310
6 months +	676

Cultural Background

Australian	1018
Asian	63
European	60
ATSI	55
Other	138

Finances

Income

Grants	726,282	
Donations	24,687	
Other	21,388	
Total		772,357

Expenditure

Wages and on costs	530,644	
Administration	97,248	
Maintenance, equip and IT	92,447	
Professional development	41,696	
Resources and travel	10,315	
Total		772,351

Balance		6
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Our Mission

To provide a 24/7 statewide telephone crisis counselling service to women who have experienced sexual violence.

To work with government, non-government, private bodies and individuals to ensure women have clear pathways and equitable access to services.

To promote and foster attitudinal change and non-violent behaviour, sexual or otherwise.

Our Values

- Feminist, holistic and empowering in approach;
- Innovative, political and professional in action; and
- Transparent, accountable and accessible in service provision.

We are committed to upholding the rights of all women to live in a socially just, equitable and non-violent society.

Counsellors will work in partnership with women to expand their choices, facilitate healing and encourage personal growth.

Our Goals

To improve recovery for women who have experienced sexual violence.

To increase access to NSW Rape Crisis Centre.

To reduce the impact of sexual violence on all women.

To operate in a best practice and quality assurance framework.

Kate Gilmore

Amnesty International said:

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.

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Counselling Contact Details

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