



NSW Rape Crisis Centre Annual Report 2004

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.**

Just over thirty years ago 500 women gathered in Sydney for a two day meeting called 'The Women's Commission.' They laughed, cried and got active. Among many other initiatives they formed the Sydney Rape Crisis Collective. These early pioneers counselled and supported women who sought their help often dealing with a hostile social environment.

In 1974 the then Whitlam Government provided the Centre's first funding.

The Centre's core function is to provide a telephone crisis, counselling and referral service. Many community education projects, often in partnership with minority groups have also been offered. All of the Centre's work has incorporated the aim of debunking sexual assault myths and encouraging women who have experienced sexual violence to speak out and seek support.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre was and is proudly feminist.

Central to the Centre's role is the:

- enhancement of the status of women,
- confronting actions which degrade, demean, denigrate or ignore women, and
- challenging sexual assault myths and stereotypes which impact greatly on: the level of violence in our society; women's recovery after sexual assault; and women's ability to achieve justice.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre is not shy in advocating for better and improved access to services.

In working to achieve a society free of violence for all women NSW Rape Crisis centre seeks partnership with all sectors of our community. Importantly this will include working with men. The Centre recognises that only a small proportion of men commit acts of violence against women and that in fact most men are just as appalled by these acts as women.

It is the dream of all of us at NSW Rape Crisis Centre that one day the phones will fall silent. That women will be free and safe in their homes, will travel and work and live life to the fullest without the fear of violence. That we will wave our daughters off for a night out with their friends without the voice in the back of our heads screaming warnings, that we will open the door to our male friends, or go to their houses or get in their cars without some of us later questioning why couldn't we tell what he had planned. That we are comfortable and free with all of our male relatives and we are

happy for our children to play unrestricted and that we can have relationships where we are never treated with violence or submit in the hope that tomorrow will be a day of peace.

It is every women's right to live free of violence and we will work, lobby and act until all women in NSW accept that right as a normal part of their daily lives.

Statewide, 24/7, telephone, crisis intervention, support counselling and referral service

What We Do

NSW Rape Crisis Centre provides a 24/7, statewide, telephone crisis intervention, support counselling and referral service for anyone who has experienced sexual violence.

How we do it

About 40% of callers to NSW Rape Crisis Centre have been assaulted in the past seven days. Callers will often be crying and very fearful of further attacks. They can be physically injured, confused, angry and be trying to make sense of 'why me' and 'how could he do that'. Where the assault was a few days ago sleeping may be difficult and be punctuated by terrible nightmares. Callers often say they are unable to eat and want to hide. Counsellors talk about the impact of trauma and assist callers to understand and contain their reactions, they will also make sure the caller is now safe. Counsellors encourage callers to go to the local sexual assault service where they can access health checks, face to face counselling and have forensic evidence taken. Callers are always informed about police procedures and encouraged to report to Police.

A further 40% of callers to the Centre were assaulted in the past or when they were children. For these callers the impact of the violence often has long lasting effects on the callers life. Callers talk of emotional pain, depression, inability to trust and at times feeling like ending it all. Counsellors may work with these callers for up to three months offering on average three calls per week. A plan is worked out with the caller which includes a number of goals. The aim is always to decrease the callers feeling of isolation and reconnect her with her community. This means that she may decide to access a counsellor in her area or she may choose to do any number of other things such as doing a TAFE course, joining a yoga group or getting active in her local community.

The remaining 20% of calls are from people supporting others who have been sexually assaulted. The supporter may be a family member, friend or a professional such as a Community worker, Doctor or Police Officer. Counsellors will talk with supporters, provide information on options and local services, talk about the impacts of sexual assault and how the supporter can best provide support. Supporters are also welcome to talk to Counsellors then or in a subsequent call about how the woman's story has impacted on them.

Underlying principles

- Sexual violence is a crime usually perpetrated by men.
- The perpetration of sexual violence is the responsibility of the perpetrator and is upheld by a patriarchal and cultural system that oppresses and exploits women.

- Working against sexual violence requires intervention at both individual and broader cultural and socio-political levels.
- All people who experience sexual assault have the right to access social services and support.

Our work is informed by..

Throughout 2003 NSW Rape Crisis Centre counsellors worked with Dr Fiona Rummery to produce 'A Best Practice Manual for Specialised Sexual Assault Crisis Telephone Counselling'. The Centre's counselling work is grounded in the instructions of this handbook. Centre practices are informed by the works and theories of experts in the trauma field such as Judith Herman and Dr John Briere.

"The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and creation of new connections." Judith Human

Improving access, community education, prevention and system change

Imbedded in the principles of democracy is the right, and the responsibility, of non-government organisations to advocate with, and on behalf of, disempowered, marginalised and alienated individuals and communities. Equally, it is the responsibility of elected officials and decision makers to listen, respect and take into account the testimony of those they represent.

It is therefore essential in any true democracy to have a strong, authoritative non-government sector. It is through the presence and actions of this sector that societies review structures and achieve systematic change resulting in continual improvements in society and the lives of the citizens who live within it.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre takes its democratic responsibilities seriously. The Centre uses any available means to advocate on behalf of those with whom the Centre has contact and will continue to advocate for systemic change to decrease the level of violence in our society and, when the violence does occur, for the rights of the victim/survivors to services and to justice, offered with compassion, dignity and respect.

Specialist Sexual Assault Courts

The Centre is campaigning for the establishment of Specialist Sexual Assault Courts where all participants are trained, where laws specific to sexual assault are enacted and where the Court has a clear responsibility to treat victims with dignity and respect. Such Courts will increase the number of women willing to report and the conviction rate for the crime of sexual assault.

The Website

As well as being the entry point to Rape Crisis Online the Centre's website has a broad range of information on sexual assault and contact details for services such as Women's Health Centres, Sexual Assault Services and NSW Police. Information on current issues and the work of NSW Rape Crisis Centre is also available. Centre contact details are easily found and there is a link for making a donation to the Centre.

Rape Crisis Online

Rape Crisis is a 24/7, online, real time, person to person crisis intervention, support and referral service. It is a less personal way of contacting Rape Crisis Counsellors for women who are undecided in making telephone contact with a counsellor. Counsellors offer one to two online contacts and then encourage phone contact. The service is about increasing access especially for young women who may feel more comfortable in an online medium.

Breaking Free

Breaking Free is the result of a national poetry and short story competition which was part of the Centre's 30th birthday celebrations. Competition guidelines required entrants to write about surviving sexual assault, women's strengths, being a woman, feminism and women's survival. Hundreds of entries were received and the best were included in an anthology called 'Breaking Free'.

Partnerships

To enhance the quality of services to women who have been sexually assaulted NSW Rape Crisis Centre has entered into a number of partnership agreements with non-government organisations. The agreements describe how both services will work together and complement each other to ensure clients in common receive the best possible co-services and seamless service delivery.

Private Practitioner's Database

Many of the callers to the Centre require referral to a private practitioner in their local area. The Centre has advertised in appropriate Journal's calling for suitable private practitioners to apply and be listed on the Centre's statewide database. Advertising, updating and expanding the database is an ongoing task made worthwhile by its continuous use.

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.

Counsellor's 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.

Facts

- 70% of perpetrators are family members, close family friends, or a person the woman goes to work or school with.
 - Of the rest most are dates or acquaintances; stranger danger is rare.
 - Most sexual assaults are one on one, committed in secret and do not involve actual physical assault.
 - Less than 1% of sexual assaults in NSW result in a jail sentence for the perpetrator.
 - Age, culture or class is no barrier to sexual assault.
 - Most sexual assaults occur in the woman's or perpetrator's home, car, work or school.
 - Sexual assault is about power and control. The aim is to degrade, humiliate and terrorise. Uncontrolled sexual desire is not a factor.
 - Nearly 11,000 sexual assaults were reported to NSW Police in the last financial year.
 - Adult men also experience sexual assault, usually by other men.
 - Sexual assault includes unwanted exposure, touching, use of objects and penetration. Use of threats, or consent by blackmail is sexual assault.
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Statistics

New Callers	1520
Repeat Callers	1832
TOTAL CALLERS	3352

Presenting Issue

Sexual Assault	715
Child Sex. Assault	320
Gang Rape	63
Drug & Assaulted	63
Self-Harming	2
Suicidal	2
Support profess'al	57
Support other	221
Other	77
TOTAL	1520

Related Issues

Adult Sex. Assault	200
Child Sex. Assault	196
Mental Health	180

Eating Disorder	19
Drug & Alcohol	71
Self-Harming	45
Suicide	44
Other	84

Cultural Background

Australian	1178
ATSI	49
European	106
Middle East	56
North America	16
South America	10
Africa	16
Asia	54
Pacific	35
TOTAL	1520

Age

0 to 15	113
16 to 25	460
26 to 35	391
36 to 45	325
46 to 55	154
55 +	77
TOTAL	1520

Disability **34**

Sydney	916
Rural	604
TOTAL	1520

Finances

Income		
Grants	694,200	
Donations	4,102	
Other	15,041	
Total		713,343

Expenditure		
Wages and on costs	565,239	
Administration	85,849	
Maintenance, equip and IT	20,504	
Professional development	40,989	
Resources and travel	12,743	
Total		725,320

Transfer from reserves		11,971
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Balance		-6
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