

Annual Report 2007-08

NSW Rape Crisis Centre

“Anything I do is my attempt to emulate the commitment of all of you at Rape Crisis and the work you do to change women’s lives. I have a career as a feminist that is well rewarded. The real issues are always on the ground and anything I can do to recognise and support that is a fraction of what women in my position should be doing.”

A leading feminist who has been assisting the Centre’s fund-raising efforts

Rape Crisis Wins Workcover Award



WorkCover NSW SafeWork Awards – October 2007
Virginia Judge MP, Jon Blackwell – WorkCover NSW, and NSW Rape Crisis Centre management and staff

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre’s Vicarious Trauma Management Program was considered by Workcover NSW to be the ‘Best Solution to an Identified Workplace Health and Safety Issue’ in 2007.

Vicarious trauma is the impact on a counsellor when working with those who have experienced trauma, for example, sexual assault. If not identified and effectively managed, vicarious trauma can lead to serious psychological injury. It is the primary occupational health and safety hazard for workers at NSW Rape Crisis Centre.

In developing the program the Centre identified a number of key issues. Vicarious trauma is inevitable and not a result of worker weakness or inadequacy. It is therefore an organisational responsibility to manage this risk. The detrimental impacts exist on a continuum, and with vigilance and a comprehensive program, vicarious trauma can be effectively managed.

Action	NSW Rape Crisis Centre Vicarious Trauma Management Program
Elimination	Not possible as contact with trauma is core to the Centre’s work.
Substitution	Not possible as the Centre is a sexual assault crisis response service.
Isolation	Not possible as contact with trauma is core to the Centre’s work.
Administrative & Training Procedures	Reduce risk through provision of education regarding Vicarious Trauma, supervision, and shift handover processes.
Personal Protection Measures	Reduce risk through individualised self-care packages. Employ direct and indirect measures of vicarious trauma to identify symptoms early.
Early Intervention	Manage symptoms through 24 hr on-call support and supervision.



National WorkCover Awards – April 2008
The Hon. Julia Gillard MP - Deputy Prime Minister and NSW Rape Crisis Centre staff

◀ Using the OH&S Hierarchy of Control

“I knew that something was wrong but I thought it was just me. Now I understand that these symptoms are from the work I do. Just knowing this already makes a difference.” Participant in Vicarious Trauma seminar:



Van Against Violence - Training in Rural & Regional NSW



Where the response is disbelieving, judgmental or uncaring the person may not speak about 'it' again. For some this will result in developing chronic sexual assault trauma.

Rural women experience higher per capita levels of sexual assault than women in Sydney. The workshops were offered in local government areas with some of the higher incidences of sexual assault such as Tenterfield which ranks 13th in NSW, the Richmond Valley 16th, Glenn Innes 20th and Tamworth 22nd.

Topics covered included sexual assault myths and incidences, common impacts of sexual assault, the criminal justice process, what to say to a person who says they have been sexually assaulted and how to assist that person to access specialist services.

As with any such interaction, the NSW Rape Crisis Centre gained knowledge about issues and challenges in rural and regional areas, and a number of strong networks which will lead to improved services for people who have been sexually assaulted, were developed.

The workshops were made possible through a grant from the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW. A further three 'tours' will be held over the next twelve months to North West, Southern and South West NSW.

In March 2008 the NSW Rape Crisis Centre's 'Van Against Violence' travelled to the NSW North Coast and New England offering workshops to over 200 health and welfare professionals. The 'Van' also met, in 15 locations, with sexual assault counsellors, other counsellors and Police. A further 40 people attended specialised presentations.

When someone says they have been sexually assaulted the first response is critical to their recovery. A response which is compassionate, non blaming and supportive will give them the confidence to make contact with sexual assault services and consider reporting to Police.

"As an ambulance officer, I feel I have been placed in a much better position to assist with care for an individual that has experienced sexual assault. Thank you." Participant in the 'Van Against Violence' Training.

Participants evaluated the workshop by ranking the statements: 1 = totally agree, 5 = totally disagree.					
Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I know more about sexual assault.	62%	27%	10%	1%	
I could help a person who has been sexually assaulted.	63%	35%	2%		
I understand more about how a person who is sexually assaulted feels.	56%	32%	9%	3%	
I know where I can refer someone who has been sexually assaulted.	82%	15%	3%		
The presentation was informative.	87%	12%	1%		
The presentation was clear.	87%	12%	1%		
I could ask questions.	90%	8%	1%		1%
I will recommend this training to other workers.	89%	9%	2%		

Consent in Sexual Assault is defined in the NSW Sex Crimes Act

On the 14th November 2007 the NSW Parliament, under the guidance of the NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos, passed a definition of consent into the NSW Crimes Act - Sex Assault Offences Law.

Consent is now defined as 'free and voluntary agreement'. A person who gains sexual intimacy through force, intimidation, abuse of authority, unlawful detention, predatory or opportunistic behaviour, or has sex with a person who is unconscious, asleep or too intoxicated to resist is now committing a serious criminal act.

These reforms also mean that if an accused argues that they had a mistaken but reasonable belief that the complainant was consenting, the jury will have to 'have regard to all the

circumstances of the case'. This will now include any steps taken by the accused to determine consent.

These reforms do not change the criminal justice process. A complaint must still be made, investigated and prosecuted. The defendant's lawyer will test the evidence during cross-examination and a jury will decide whether the prosecution has proved lack of consent beyond reasonable doubt.

What this legislation achieves is clarity and greater access to information for juries. This will allow decisions which more accurately reflect community attitudes to consent. Critically those attitudes being that if two people are negotiating intimacy it is incumbent on both to ensure the other is consenting.



The Counselling Service

Counsellors at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre responded to more requests for assistance in this financial year than in any previous year. This increase is unlikely to represent an increase in sexual assault incidences within NSW over the last 12 months. It is more likely to indicate an increase in the capacity of the counselling team to respond to more calls and online contacts than before. In September, the counselling service began operating with e-documentation only. The reduction in paper usage is less demanding of natural resources and it reduces the time counsellors need to spend on administrative matters. This in turn frees up Counsellors to respond to more callers.

Even with this very high volume of calls, we are aware that the counselling team cannot meet the total yearly demand for service. Additional funds are required if we are to meet our goal of being able to provide effective and compassionate service to all people in NSW who are affected by sexual violence and seek assistance through the Centre's telephone and online counselling services.

The work of the counsellors has been supported this year by a project research worker who is responsible for reviewing and updating the Best Practice Manual that guides the clinical practice of the Centre. The funding required for this position was generously donated by a member of the public.

"I will be leaving my role as Counsellor at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre shortly to move into a different sphere of practicing psychology. I really came to understand what feminism is and just how important it is while working here. I also learned to hold my centre in work with challenging presentations."
Counsellor; NSW Rape Crisis Centre.



The Best Practice Manual for Specialised Sexual Assault Crisis Telephone & Online Counselling

The Best Practice Manual is currently undergoing its first review since the completion of the first edition in October 2003. The purpose of this manual is to be a guiding document to assist counsellors at the Centre in their daily work. The information provided in the manual is drawn from the professional literature and empirical research conducted in the area of sexual assault and crisis intervention. The manual represents a significant part of the process of standardising the practices of counsellors when assessing and responding to those who contact the Centre for assistance.

The review commenced in May 2008 and the first draft of the manual is currently two and half times larger than the first edition, containing significantly more detailed and researched material and empirical support for the counselling practices utilised at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. The draft is currently being reviewed by RCC counsellors, recognised experts and other professionals working in the area of sexual assault. The Manual will be officially launched in March 2009 and available for sale thereafter.

Aims

The Best Practice Manual for Specialised Sexual Assault Crisis Telephone and Online Counselling, 2nd Edition (NSW Rape Crisis Centre, 2008) aims to:

- Provide an overview of the clinical practices adopted by the NSW Rape Crisis Centre;

- Present the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence for these practices;
- Standardise the practices of the counselling team working within the centre; and
- Provide information and guidance for other professionals working in the area of sexual assault and crisis counselling to encourage adherence to a best practice model.

Child Protection Training

All counsellors at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre attended a one day training course in March 2008. The training comprised of a nationally accredited course that provides the knowledge and skills necessary to assess and effectively intervene in situations where children are at risk of neglect, physical and sexual abuse and/or psychological harm.

All counsellors at the NSW Rape Crisis Centre are mandatory reporters and the Centre makes an average of six reports of children at risk to the NSW Department of Community Services each month. The training updated the counsellors' knowledge about salient legislative changes and effective methods of intervening so that children in our society are protected from harm wherever possible. Assessment of the counsellors' knowledge is now being conducted and formal accreditation of all counsellors is hoped to be achieved in 2009.



Centre's Financial Situation - Income Continues to Fall Short of Demand

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre's finances continue to be of considerable concern. In the past four years calls to the Centre have increased by 141% resulting in a 28% increase in costs. During the same period there has been an 11% increase in grant income. In the 2008/09 year the Centre will need to raise \$202,000 to balance the budget. Compounding this is the 2,100 people who tried to contact the Centre in 2007/08 but were responded to by the answering service as the Counsellor was with another caller.

It is a reasonable expectation that when a person experiences sexual assault they should be able to contact a 24/7 sexual assault trauma counsellor. This expectation is not being met in NSW. If core funding to the Centre is not considerably increased, current service levels will be further impacted.

The Centre's Management Committee worked hard to achieve a balanced budget in 2007/08. The Sydney South West Area Health Service made one off allocations and donations have been received. The Centre's training and consultancy work continues to be an income source and efficiency measures have decreased costs.

While this work has resulted in a balanced budget in 2007/08, it must be asked - how long can the service maintain this annual and increasing need to fundraise, and how long can we in NSW accept that those who are attempting to access a sexual assault crisis service may, at times, be responded to by an answering machine.

A \$1.3 million increase in recurrent core funding is urgently required. \$202,000 to maintain existing services and the balance to meet increasing demand.



Sexual Ethics Project Educators – October 2007

Sexual Ethics & Rape Prevention Project

The Sexual Ethics and Rape Prevention project developed and tested a sexual assault prevention education program for young people. It aimed to encourage ethical sexual behaviour and decrease sexual assault. The program is experiential and takes a positive approach to sex and sexuality. Importantly young people were consulted and their values and opinions are reflected in the program.

This work has been undertaken in partnership with Associate Professor Moira Carmody from the University of Western Sydney and funded by the Australian Research Council. The project is now complete and the results will be launched in December 2008.

Statistics

New callers	1,399
Repeat callers	5,630
Total callers	7,029

Most common presenting issue	
Sexual assault	41%
Childhood sexual assault	17%
Drugged and assaulted	3%
Gang rape	3%

When assault occurred	
Last 7 days	31%
8 days to six months	21%
Over 6 months	48%

Disability	
Physical	18
Intellectual	12
Both	8

Supporters	27%
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Age	
Under 15	3%
16 to 25	33%
26 to 35	26%
36 to 45	22%
46 to 55	11%
Over 55	5%

Cultural background	
Australian	81%
ATSI	2%
European	6%
Middle Eastern	2%
North American	2%
South American	1%
African	1%
Asian	4%
Pacific Islanders	1%

Finances

Income	
Grants	903,093
Donations	28,101
Other	42,231
Total	973,425

Expenditure	
Wages and on costs	763,788
Administration	105,677
Maintenance, equipment and IT	50,373
Professional development	23,672
Resources and travel	30,634
Total	974,144

Transfer from Reserves	700
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Balance	-19
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