



Loddon Campaspe
***Centre Against
Sexual Assault***

Introduction

The purpose of this submission is to draw attention to the relationship between sexual assault and family violence and to recognise the high prevalence of sexual abuse in family violence relationships. We aim to demonstrate how the Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault currently provides specialised therapeutic treatment services to victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence. We intend to explain that the Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault require funding to:

- continue to work therapeutically with victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence and sexual assault more broadly
- continue to offer an after – hours service to victim / survivors of family violence and sexual assault
- continue to offer an intervention program (SABTS) which aims at significantly reducing the likelihood of problem behaviours continuing into adulthood
- continue the outreach service to rural communities
- increase staff and resource to correspond with the increase of clients engaging the service

Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault

The Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault (LCCASA) is an organisation who provides therapeutic treatment services to people impacted by sexual assault. LCCASA offers therapeutic counselling services for victim/ survivors of sexual assault, their family members and anyone impacted by sexual assault. LCCASA provides:

- Crisis telephone counselling and 24 hour crisis care for recent sexual assaults and family violence victims
- Medical care, counselling and support
- Research on the incidence and impacts of sexual assault
- Information and consultation to professional and community members regarding sexual assault
- Professional training and community education
- A program which assists children up until the age of fifteen years old who exhibit sexually abusive behaviours (SABTS).

LCCASA is committed to addressing all inequalities within society, which result in the perpetration of sexual violence predominantly by men against women and children.

LCCASA acknowledges that:

- sexual assault is both a consequence and a reinforcer of the power disparity existing between men and women. It is a violent act of power which, in the main, is carried out by men against women and children often within the family network or by someone known to them
- sexual assault occurs along a continuum of violent behaviour which includes: any uninvited sexual behaviour which makes the recipient feel uncomfortable, harassed or afraid; unwanted touching or remarks; sexual harassment; coerced sexual activity; and rape with physical violence and threat to life

- the impact of sexual assault on the lives of victim/survivors is multi-faceted and complex. They include emotional, social, psychological, legal, health and political consequences. In order to facilitate a victim/survivor's recovery from sexual violence, it is important to respond to each aspect in an appropriate and effective manner
- the impact of sexual assault can be compounded by factors relating to the stratification of society on the basis of gender, culture, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, ability and socio-economic class.

LCCASA believes that sexual assault is a crime against the individual and society. The entire community and all tiers of government must therefore take responsibility for its occurrence and consequences and work towards the elimination of sexual assault.

Local Context

Currently LCCASA employs fourteen staff members consisting of a manager, two team leaders, eleven counsellor / advocates, one intake worker and two in administration. Based on statistics from LCCASA existing client base 58.72% of current LCCASA clients have experienced family violence (FV) in their life and 19.77% of current LCCASA clients have experienced FV during the past 12 months. This indicates a significant relationship between sexual assault and FV with over half of LCCASA current clients experiencing family violence. It is important to note that it is likely that some current clients have not disclosed or identified their experiences of family violence and therefore the data provided is likely under reported. LCCASA therefore believes that these statistics represent the tip of the iceberg.

Relationship Between Family Violence and Sexual Assault

C/A Name	Total number of current clients	Total number of current clients who have EVER experienced FV	Total number of current clients with experience of FV during the past 12 months
A.L.	23	20	8
C.H.	11	7	0
J.T.	25	13	5
J.S.	18	9	1
J.K.	20	9	3
M.B.	17	10	5
S.D.	8	7	5
T.D.	19	5	0
T.O.	21	16	6
S.A.	10	5	1
TOTAL	136	86	29

LCCASA are currently apart of the family violence consortium within the Loddon Campaspe region. Key members include the Centre for Non Violence, Annie North Women's Refuge, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and LCCASA. LCCASA's position within this consortium is crucial as LCCASA provides specialist therapeutic counselling for victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence and sexual assault

more broadly. In managing family violence LCCASA works with the Centre for Non-Violence whose mission is to promote policy and community action to end violence, bullying and abuse in the community. CNV's goals are to change public attitudes to violence in the community, to support victims of violence and to provide opportunities for accountability and change for men who use violence. Therapeutic counseling for family violence is limited within the region. LCCASA currently fills this gap and provide specialised therapeutic treatment services to victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence and sexual assault more broadly. LCCASA supports people who have been impacted by family violence and sexual assault to find hope. We care and listen. We work with our clients to save and restore lives. Here are examples of the feedback that LCCASA receive from clients "before being seen at CASA, I had no hope. I was in despair. I have now been listened to and believed. I feel like I can finally move on it my life" and "I was in a very unhealthy relationship that I did not know how to get out of, CASA provided me counselling for the sexual assault I experienced as a child, through this experience I was able to see that my current partner was hurting me also. I was able to move on from this relationship and find true happiness within myself". LCCASA recognise that there needs to be specialised therapeutic intervention to address the issues of past abuse for both males and female clients and to aid in the recovery of victim / survivors.

LCCASA offer an after-hours service to respond to incidence of family violence and sexual assault. Included in this service are advocacy, accommodation, medical attention, food and clothing. According to the City of Greater Bendigo's Family Violence Prevention Plan 2012 - 2015 during 2010/2011 local Bendigo police responded to 753 family violence incidents in Bendigo compared to 420 incidents for the 2006/2007 year. During this same period the Centre for Non-Violence provided a service to 901 women experiencing family violence in the Loddon Campaspe region.

LCCASA provide an outreach service to Echuca, Maryborough, Kyneton, Kyabram and the Tarrengower Women's Prison. We pride ourselves on being able to reach the rural communities within the Loddon Campaspe Region. On each of the outreach services we have a female and a male Counsellor / Advocate with each specialising in working with either adults or children.

During July 2015 LCCASA will be the leading organisation involved in the first multi disciplinary centre in Bendigo. This centre will bring together in a single location the key services involved in supporting those who have experienced sexual assault including LCCASA the Department of Human Services Child Protection, and Victoria Police, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT). The MDC model will facilitate a collaborative approach between services to provide those who have experienced sexual assault with safety, support and access to justice within an integrated, seamless environment.

Sexual Assault within Family Violence

LCCASA are specifically and highly trained in managing trauma related to family violence and sexual assault, this is an exceedingly sought after and vital service for both individuals and the community. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey (2005) surveyed adults in Australia aged 18 years and over. The findings of this survey found that sexual assault is a significant form of family violence. They found that approximately half a million Australian women reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence or sexual assault in the past 12 months (The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Furthermore more than a million women had experienced physical or sexual assault by their male current or ex-partner since the age of 15 (The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). An updated survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Personal Safety, Australia (2012) found that women aged 18 years and over were more likely to have experienced sexual violence by a known person than by a stranger. An estimated 1,433,400 women had experienced sexual violence by a known person compared to 462,100 women who had experienced sexual violence by a stranger. The most likely type of known perpetrator was a partner (517,400 of all women). Women who had experienced sexual assault since the age of 15 were more likely to have been sexually assaulted by someone they knew than by a stranger. The survey explored the prevalence of help seeking behaviour and found that approximately 68% of women had sought advice or support after their most recent incident of physical assault by a male (Australian Bureau of Statistics on Personal Safety Australia, 2012). These statistics firmly indicate the need for therapeutic treatment services for victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence and sexual assault more broadly.

There is a vital need for counsellor's who provide the specialist service to have appropriate training to ensure an understanding of sensitivity and knowledge around working with clients

who have experienced significant trauma through family violence and sexual assault.

A report by Kezelman, Hossack, Stavropoulos and Burley (2015) on the cost of unresolved childhood trauma and abuse in adults in Australia recognises the need for specialist services such as LCCASA in working with trauma and abuse survivors. Kezelman, Hossack, Stavropoulos and Burley (2015) reported that an estimated 40% of Australian children who have experienced sexual abuse are also exposed to family violence. Specialist services are needed to spearhead policy and practice responses in relation to adult childhood trauma and abuse survivors (Kezelman, Hossack, Stavropoulos and Burley, 2015). This requires active investment which supports a coordinated comprehensive model of care including continued and increased access to assistance and treatment. Early active comprehensive intervention including appropriate support, counselling, resources and services promotes recovery (Kezelman, Hossack, Stavropoulos and Burley, 2015).

A statistic that cannot be easily determined is that of women and children who are currently living with the threat and the fear of family violence every day. According to Family Violence Index (2014) approximately two women are killed by her current or former partner every week. It has further been reported that three quarters of all reported assaults against women happen at home and that women and children are most likely to have crimes committed against them in their own homes (Family Violence Index, 2014). Gregory (2004) indicates the following as reasons a woman feels they cannot leave the relationship even when they are experiencing family violence including sexual assault:

- the woman has been repeatedly disempowered
- controlling behaviour often starts at the birth of the first child
- women are wanting to be good mothers and partners
- women feel responsible to ensure the relationship works and the children's needs are met

- women feel responsible to keep their family together
- women feel financially dependent on their partner

Power and control are at the core of what is being perpetrated against these women and children. A common misconception of family violence is that abuse is not recognised as family violence until the violence becomes physical violence, however power and control that is so often used includes but is not limited to:

- physical violence
- coercion and threats
- intimidation
- emotional abuse
- isolation
- minimizing
- denying and blaming
- using children
- using male privilege
- economic abuse
- religious abuse
- sexual abuse

The impacts of these acts of power and control directly hurt the female victim and also leave severe impressions on children. A child who experiences family violence in the home is not being shown the meaning of equality. These children fail to benefit from non-violence and non-threatening behaviour, negotiation and fairness, respect, trust and support, honesty and accountability, responsible parenting, gender shared responsibility and economic partnership. Gregory (2004) states some of the many common impacts that family violence and sexual assault has on a child include being traumatised reducing the child's capacity to learn,

disregulation due to a lack of a safe, predictable and reliable environment, hypervigilance and anxiety minimising a child's learning capacity, restricted attachment with their mother as a result of a mother's reduced capacity to respond due to being consumed by fear, attachment issues can create disruption to developmental stages, poor gender modeling perpetuating imbalance of power as social norm and a significant increased danger on lives if the woman leaves the relationship. LCCASA has witnessed these impacts first hand in children who attend counselling and adult clients who experienced family violence and sexual assault as a child. We often see clients who have a history of family violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction as a consequence of an underlying issue of sexual assault. LCCASA recognises the importance of therapeutic counselling to assist women and children who have experienced trauma resulting from family violence and sexual assault.

Current interventions to reduce the likelihood of re-occurrence of SA

Gregory (2004) describes how each person develops their own life plan according to the messages they receive from parents, parental figures, peers and society. At an early age belief systems are formed regarding behaviour. Non-violence is the product of children being raised in safe, loving environments with healthy attachments. When a person has been exposed to family violence and sexual assault therapeutic counselling can address past trauma and unhealthy belief systems, creating new understanding of one's self and an understanding of non-violent behaviour. Therapeutic counselling challenges individual belief systems and explores the development of such ideas. Furthermore it exposes unconscious beliefs and assists in a means of empowerment and choice. Therapeutic counselling for people who have experienced family violence and sexual assault aids to create future respectful nurturing relationships. Established in 2007, LCCASA offers a Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Service for children and young people under the age of 15 years who display problem sexual behaviour or sexually abusive behaviour towards others. LCCASA works with the child/young person as well as their family, school and community, the services provide an assessment and intervention framework to address the broader needs of the child/young person. Involvement of the family in treatment is essential in producing the best outcome for the child or young person. To support a child or young person's efforts to change their behaviours, the parents or carer need to understand the sexual abusive behaviour cycle, and the emotional states and circumstances that enable the behaviour to occur, including family dynamics that might trigger the cycle. The impact of sexually abusive behaviours on children, young people and the child or young person displaying the behaviours may be long term. The SABTS program significantly reduces the likelihood of the behaviours continuing. Prescott and Longo (2010) report that in a recent meta-analysis of nine studies Reitzel and Carbonell (2006) found that youth who had received abuse specific treatment recidivated at a

rate of 7.37% while youth who received no treatment recidivated at a rate of 18.93%, showing a very encouraging effect of treatment on recidivism. Sexual abuse within the home on a family member is a form of family violence. LCCASA intervention through the SABTS program is helping prevent the child or young person going into adulthood and continuing the family violence cycle through power, control and sexual assault. Referrals to the SABTS program are from parents, families, caregivers, DHS or Police. Victoria Police may direct a child or young person to attend the program voluntarily by a Therapeutic Treatment Referral, or involuntarily by the Children's Court via a Therapeutic Treatment Order (TTO). Secondary consultations are also offered to professionals supporting a child or young person who is exhibiting problem sexual behaviours.

Reason for submission

There are a number of reasons LCCASA chose to write this submission. LCCASA believe it is important to advocate and cement the role of LCCASA in the family violence sector. An increasing number of clients are disclosing sexual assault by their partners within the family home, it is critical to a person's safety and wellbeing for counsellors to be able to give specific therapeutic support around the complexities of sexual assault within the context of family violence. The recent Victorian Royal Commission into sexual assault amplified the amount of referrals from victim / survivors, many identifying that the coverage lead them to sourcing help. LCCASA anticipate that the current Royal Commission into Family Violence will have the same effect and the demand on LCCASA is likely to increase. LCCASA currently:

- work therapeutically with victim / survivors of sexual assault within the context of family violence and sexual assault more broadly
- offer an after – hours service to victim / survivors of family violence and sexual assault
- offer an intervention program (SABTS) which aims at significantly reducing the likelihood of problem behaviours continuing into adulthood
- An outreach service to be accessible to rural communities

To continue achieving to provide these services and to keep up with current client demand, LCCASA requires more funding. Our impending move to the MDC allows us to be able to provide our clients with an improved response and support to sexual assault and an increase in clients will be well managed within the new centre. However, LCCASA have found the demand for our service is significantly increasing putting pressure on current staff to bare the larger workloads. As our client numbers increase staff numbers and resources need to correspond with this increase. A higher demand on our outreach services requires an increase

in work vehicles. Funding for the LCCASA service needs to be significant in order to continue to provide this fundamental service to the Loddon Campaspe community.