

## Untangling the knot of child abuse Blue Knot Day, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014

*It takes survivors an average of 22 years to tell someone about their abuse*

**Australia, 20 August 2014:** The last Monday of October is ASCA's annual *Blue Knot Day*. This year, on the 27<sup>th</sup> October, Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA), asks all Australians to unite in support of the estimated five million Australian adult survivors of childhood trauma<sup>i</sup>.

*Blue Knot Day*, ASCA's National Awareness Day, provides hope, optimism and pathways to recovery for the one in four adults affected by childhood trauma<sup>ii</sup>.

This year's *Blue Knot Day* theme is 'recovery is possible'. With the issue of child abuse being so prominent, ASCA is calling on the community to get involved – whether it is an activity in someone's home, a church gathering or a company event, the participation of the wider Australian community can make a huge difference.

ASCA President, Dr Cathy Kezelman, said: "Through the Royal Commission and other inquiries Australia has borne witness to some confronting stories of child abuse. In the past few years, cases once hidden have finally come to light. We need to make sure that everyone knows recovery is possible and there are people who can help.

"In order to have a strong support system in place, education and training is urgently needed for health professionals and organisations working with adult survivors of childhood abuse and trauma.

"ASCA's work and research show that with the right help, people can and do recover. Raising community awareness and starting a discussion are essential steps towards de-stigmatising the issue and helping those affected."

The Royal Commission's findings have revealed it takes survivors an average of 22 years to tell someone about their abuse<sup>iii</sup>. The *Blue Knot Day* initiative aims to raise awareness of the importance of education and training for practitioners and make this a topic that individuals and the wider community can talk about more openly.

Acclaimed singer, ASCA ambassador and survivor, Rose Parker said: "Untangling the impacts of child abuse can take a lifetime. This *Blue Knot Day* we are encouraging those affected to reach out for support. There has never been a better time for those who have suffered to speak out and be acknowledged, supported and appropriately assisted on their road to recovery. We know that with positive relationships and the right professional help, recovery is not just possible, but probable."

By visiting the ASCA website communities can find out how they can get involved with the *Blue Knot Day* events that help adult survivors reconnect with their families, friends and communities. ASCA also urges individuals, organisations and workplaces, to get involved by donating to ASCA this *Blue Knot Day* at <http://www.givenow.com.au/blueknotday>.

All funds raised will help support the primary prevention work of ASCA through professional training for healthcare professionals and services, education for the community and support for survivors of childhood trauma and abuse.

Dr Kezelman added: “The official *Blue Knot Day* ceremony will be held at Canberra’s Parliament House and feature the Chair of the Royal Commission, Justice Peter McClellan and the Minister for Health, the Hon. Peter Dutton MP. It will be supported by a week long effort. During this week, the support of communities will help to reduce the impact of childhood trauma and foster a healthier community, assist survivors to reach out for help, and bring hope and optimism to all of those affected.”

The full range of activities held during Blue Knot week (October 27th – November 2nd), with details, will be added to the website progressively over the coming weeks.

To get involved please visit [www.asca.org.au/blueknotday](http://www.asca.org.au/blueknotday).

#### **Statistics on childhood trauma and abuse in Australia:**

- An estimated five million Australian adults have experienced childhood trauma<sup>iv</sup>.
- In Australia, one in three girls and one in six boys is sexually abused before the age of eighteen<sup>v</sup>.
- Recent Australian research found that adults with a history of childhood abuse suffer from significantly more health conditions, incur higher annual health care costs and are more likely to harm themselves. The results suggest that child abuse has long-lasting economic and welfare costs. The costs are greatest for those who experienced both physical and sexual abuse<sup>vi</sup>.
- Australian studies show that child abuse survivors are almost two and a half times as likely to have poor mental health outcomes, four times more likely to be unhappy even in much later life and more likely to have poor physical health<sup>vii</sup>.
- Global data found that 90% of public mental health clients have been exposed to multiple physical or sexual abuse traumas. Without intervention, adverse childhood events (ACEs) result in long-term disease, disability, chronic social problems and early death<sup>viii</sup>.

*Help and support is available from the ASCA professional support line on 1300 657 380, 9am-5pm Monday-Sunday.*

- ENDS -

**Twitter:** @BlueKnotDay and @ASCAORG

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/blueknotday>

**Media Contact:** Louise Proctor [louise@launchgroup.com.au](mailto:louise@launchgroup.com.au) 02 9492 1000 / 0452 574 244

**About ASCA:** [www.asca.org.au](http://www.asca.org.au)

ASCA is the leading national organisation supporting the estimated five million Australian adults who are survivors of childhood trauma, including abuse. ASCA provides hope, optimism and pathways to recovery for adults.

At the forefront of pioneering trauma informed policy, practice and research, ASCA has been instrumental in supporting the work of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and people engaging with it. This includes the training of key workers and practitioners.

In 2012 ASCA released Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery, a global first in setting the standards for clinical and organisational practice. ASCA is a founding member of the national Trauma Informed Care and Practice Advisory Working Group.

Formed in 1995, ASCA provides a range of services including professional phone support with trauma informed counsellors, a referral database, advocacy, research, workshops for survivors and their supporters, along with education, training and professional development for workers, organisations and health care professionals.

---

<sup>i</sup> Estimated from a range of key sources placing the figure at 5 million adult survivors of childhood trauma.

<sup>ii</sup> Swanston, H., Parkinson, P., Oates, K., O'Toole, B., Plunkett, A., Shrimpton, S. "Further abuse of sexually abused children", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 26, No. 2, February 2002, pp 115-127

<sup>iii</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse, Interim Report, vol. 1

<sup>iv</sup> Estimated from a range of key sources placing the figure at 5 million adult survivors of childhood trauma.

<sup>v</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse, Interim Report, vol. 1

<sup>vi</sup> Modelling the Relationship between Child Abuse and Long-Term Health Care Costs and Wellbeing: Results from an Australian Community-Based Survey\* REBECCA REEVE and KEES VAN GOOL; *ECONOMIC RECORD*, VOL. 89, NO. 286, SEPTEMBER, 2013, 300–318

<sup>vii</sup> Draper, B., Pfaff, J., Pirkis, J., Snowdon, J., Lautenschlager, N., Wilson, I., et al. (2007). Long-Term Effects of Childhood Abuse on the Quality of Life and Health of Older People: Results from the Depression and early prevention of Suicide in General Practice Project. *JAGS*

<sup>viii</sup> Childhood Experience Study (Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente, see [www.ACEstudy.org](http://www.ACEstudy.org)) and The Damaging Consequences of Violence and Trauma (see [www.NASMHPD.ORG](http://www.NASMHPD.ORG)). Chart created by Ann Jennings, PhD. [www.annafoundation.org](http://www.annafoundation.org)