

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Older Australians more likely to seek support for past child abuse**

*New research into childhood trauma & abuse released this Blue Knot Day reveals hope of recovery for older generations*

**Australia, Monday October 26, 2015:** Today is **Blue Knot Day**, the national awareness day of Adults Surviving Child Abuse ([ASCA](#)), that aims to raise awareness for the estimated five million adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse<sup>1</sup>.

In recognition of the day, ASCA has released new research from its 1300 professional support line, which revealed that survivors aged between 40-69, and more specifically 50-59, are the most common age group to seek support for past abuse (70 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively).

When comparing the data of last year's reporting period (September 2013-2014), the majority of callers were in the 40 – 49 year old age range (30 per cent). However this year there was a reported six per cent drop to 24 per cent. This reporting period saw a 10 per cent increase in those calling in the 50-59 age group making this age bracket the most likely to seek support.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's interim report established that it takes on average 22 years for people to disclose<sup>1</sup>. However ASCA's latest data revealed it often takes longer to seek help, with 19 per cent of people in the 60-69 year age group and six per cent in the 70-79 ear age group calling the professional support line for the first time.

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Applicable Respondents 2015
0-19	2	0%
20-29	42	8%
30-39	85	16%
40-49	125	24%
50-59	140	27%
60-69	97	19%
70-79	29	6%
80+	2	0%

*ASCA 2015 Report: Age of respondents*

In reporting impacts from abuse, 87 per cent reported mental health impacts and 37 per cent physical health impacts. Over half (52 per cent) reported impacts on relationships with their immediate family, 37 per cent on their partner, 17 per cent on their parenting abilities and 23 per cent on extended family. Further to this, 73 per cent of callers reported multiple impacts, and given the majority of callers make only one call to the line, ASCA considers this an underestimate.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated from a range of key resources

Type of Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Applicable Respondents
Mental Health	1,436	87%
Immediate Family	862	52%
Physical Health	620	38%
Partner	611	37%
Employment	486	29%
Extended family	376	23%
Friend	387	23%
Suicidality	314	19%
Parenting	279	17%
Alcohol	192	12%
Drugs	145	9%
Criminal Justice	81	5%
Gambling	6	0%

*ASCA 2015 Report: Impacts of abuse*

The data also revealed the reporting of negative impacts to employment as a consequence of abuse more than doubled compared to last year’s study – from 12 per cent to 29 per cent of users who reported any impact from abuse. These impacts further validate the findings from ASCA’s Economic Report, released in early 2015, which estimated that by a conservative estimate, the cost of failing to provide the right pathways for recovery for Australian adult survivors of childhood trauma is \$9.8 billion annually<sup>2</sup>.

President of Adults Surviving Child Abuse, Dr Cathy Kezelman AM, said this year’s findings, in regards to the age of callers, attested to the need for urgent action.

“It has always taken a long time for people to trust enough to seek help. The increase of older callers corresponds with high numbers of people impacted by historical abuse coming before the Child Abuse Royal Commission - many cannot wait any longer for redress and appropriate support.”

“Many of the older callers report never telling a soul about their abuse but how it has affected their whole life. You just need to look at the impacts on people’s lives we have reported to begin to appreciate the lifetime burden of which many survivors speak. As a community we need to bring hope and very real possibilities for recovery as. We urge the Turnbull government to show leadership, and working with the States and Territories to commit to the national redress scheme before it is too late. The costs involved are significant, although far less than those of inaction,” Dr Kezelman said.

**Other key statistics from the research:**

- The gender of callers was mainly females (74 per cent) compared to males and those identifying as transgender (24 per cent and two per cent, respectively)

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- In ASCA's current reporting period, the number of referrals to ASCA increased 2.6 times from prior reporting period
- There was an increase in the number of referrals made to counsellors and other professional supports, up from 24 per cent in last reporting period to 37 per cent

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) and Mrs Linda Hurley graciously offered Government House Sydney for this year's, ASCA official **Blue Knot Day** launch event. This evening (26<sup>th</sup> October), the Reception will be hosted by His Excellency The Honourable TF Bathurst AC, Lieutenant-Governor of New South Wales and Mrs Bathurst. ASCA President Dr Cathy Kezelman AM will announce Australian media personality, Jane Caro as a new ASCA Ambassador.

This year's **Blue Knot Day** highlights how instrumental groups and communities are in helping survivors to recover. ASCA is urging Australians to get involved by wearing blue and hosting their own event in support of the day.

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

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**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, their families and communities. ASCA provides hope, optimism and pathways to recovery for those affected.

At the forefront of pioneering trauma informed policy, practice and research, ASCA has been instrumental in supporting the work of the 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. In 2015 ASCA released an Economic Report, The Cost of Unresolved Childhood Trauma and Abuse in Adults in Australia, leading the conversation around the economic imperative of providing the right services for adult survivors.

Formed in 1995, ASCA provides a range of services including professional phone support with trauma informed counsellors, a referral database, resources, advocacy, research, educational workshops for survivors and family members, partners and loved ones, along with training, professional development and other services for workers, organisations and professionals, including those from health and legal sectors.

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<sup>i</sup> Page 158, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual abuse Interim Report Volume 1