

# Breaking free

asca

Adults Surviving Child Abuse

The Newsletter of Adults Surviving Child Abuse | ISSN 1836-6899 | April 2012

## ASCA welcomes parliamentary inquiry in Victoria: calls for Royal Commission Australia-wide

The parliamentary inquiry announced by Premier Baillieu in Victoria into child sexual assault (CSA) by clergy is to be welcomed. A call for a similar inquiry by NSW Greens MP David Shoebridge has now been announced. Yet the independence, duration, structure, powers and reach of such inquiries must be brought into question. Some of these concerns would be better addressed by a Royal Commission with Australia-wide reach.

Child sexual assault is a pervasive social practice which affects all Australians. It is not restricted to Victoria or NSW. Nor is it restricted to religious and other institutions. However, systems within many institutions have conspired to perpetuate these crimes. Countless Australian lives have been lost or ruined. Finally the voices of victims and victim groups have been heard. We cannot afford to waste this opportunity. The health and wellbeing of future generations of Australians depend on it.

Religious institutions are predominantly closed patriarchal systems. The more closed the organisation or institution, often the greater the investment in maintaining silence and secrecy. Many religious institutions in the past have protected the institution and its clergy rather than children and victims. More victims have been created. Governments have been reluctant to intervene.

Child sexual assault is an issue of power; the power of a perpetrator over a victim. The perpetuation of systemic child sexual assault within institutions has also been about power: the power of institutions to operate by internal rules while eschewing laws of the land

designed to protect citizens and promote accountability.

Only a Royal Commission with broad terms of reference would wield the power needed to scrutinise such historically closed and powerful systems. Only a Royal Commission would have the power to compel witnesses to appear, and documents, previously sealed, to be accessed. It is time to build on the start made in Victoria and establish an Australia-wide Royal Commission; one which is comprehensive, transparent and far-reaching.

**Dr Cathy Kezelman | ASCA President**

*Cathy explores this issue further on page 5.*



National  
*families week*  15-21 May 2012  
**Families Make All the Difference: Helping Kids to Grow and Learn**

### ASCA President official Ambassador for National Families Week

Cathy Kezelman, ASCA President, has been appointed an official Ambassador for National Families Week, 15 to 21 May 2012.

Each year, tens of thousands of people and hundreds of organisations celebrate National Families Week. In 2011, more than 113,000 people participated in related events around the country, illustrating the importance of families within the community.

National Families Week is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous

Affairs (FaHCSIA). The Department of Human Services is also involved and provides support through its national network.

This year's theme is "Families make all the difference: helping kids to grow and learn." Activities include a national media campaign and community events that encourage reflection on the critical role families play in teaching, supporting and nurturing children as they grow.

*Turn to page 4 to find out more from Brian Babington, Families Australia CEO*

# From the Editor

Welcome to the April issue of *Breaking Free*, and my first go at filling Catherine's shoes as editor. I look forward to working with ASCA over the coming months as this newsletter continues to help readers untangle the knot of child abuse. It is an honour to be part of this process.

This issue focuses on implications of the Victorian government's announcement of an inquiry into child abuse within institutions. Dr Cathy Kezelman, ASCA President, while applauding Victoria for leading the way, joins the voices of ASCA Ambassadors, Chrissie and Anthony Foster, in calling for a broader inquiry with greater powers. Nowhere is the issue of power more pivotal than in the arena of abuse. The powerful position of the institution as perpetrator must be met with the full breadth and depth of the law.



This month we include a feature from Brian Babington, CEO of Families Australia – an organisation that shares ASCA's commitment to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Karen Wilson introduces her memoir in 'My Story' and readers are invited to raise much-needed funds for ASCA by becoming a regular donor or an Everyday Hero. See the back page for details of ASCA survivor and health professional workshops and how to register. Be quick!

**Kath O'Sullivan | Editor**

## ASCA Staff Changes

This month we farewell Catherine Davis. We thank her for her valued contribution and commitment to ASCA over the last year.

We are pleased to welcome two new staff members. **Karyn Warner** joins us two days a week as Office Manager and **Prenessa Moodley** will be in the office three days a week as Events & Marketing Coordinator.

Karyn is currently part-time Operations Manager at a local funds manager and was previously Office Manager at the Australian Coal Association. She is also a qualified librarian.

Prenessa has been working within the events industry for the last seven years and is currently studying community services at the Australian College of Applied Psychology.

Finally, we welcome our new *Breaking Free* editor **Kath O'Sullivan**. Kath is a writer, editor and psychotherapist with a long history of working in both communication and counselling roles across public, private and non-government sectors. She has edited a range of health, business and psychology publications and writes regularly on relationship issues.

**Margaret Price | COO ASCA**



*Karyn Warner – Office Manager*



*Prenessa Moodley – Events & Marketing Coordinator*

### ASCA Administration

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### National Office Hours

9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday  
Information & Support Line: **1300 657 380**

**Donations** can be made online at [www.asca.org.au](http://www.asca.org.au) Donations to ASCA of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

### Newsletter

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### Patrons

Professor Freda Briggs AO and  
Thomas Keneally AO

### Ambassadors

Anthony and Chrissie Foster

### Have your contact details changed?

If your contact details have changed, you can update them at [www.asca.org.au](http://www.asca.org.au) (or contact ASCA on (02) 8920 3611 if you do not have access to the internet or email).

### Forgotten your Username and Password?

If you have forgotten your username and/or password, go to join/login on our website and click on *Forgot your User Name?* or *Forgot your Password?* as appropriate.

### Follow Us

[www.twitter.com/asca.org](http://www.twitter.com/asca.org)

[facebook.com/groups/adultssurviving-childabuse](http://facebook.com/groups/adultssurviving-childabuse)

### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter have been included to allow our members to consider a variety of therapeutic options and spiritual views. ASCA does not support any particular spiritual stance over another; nor does it uphold any particular therapy as superior. The Editorial Team accepts responsibility for all editorial comment.

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**ASCA workshops for survivors and health care professionals.**  
**Register now!** See back page for details.



## Gaining a Sense of Self a difficult early life

I have chronicled my difficult early life in my book, *Gaining a Sense of Self*, published by Sid Harta in 2010. I worked as a librarian in Queensland and Tasmania until my breakdown in 1995. The catalyst for my mental condition was being bullied while working in a school environment. The consequences were serious because I was becoming suicidal. The chance listening to a Radio National Program in 1997 about diaries and the subsequent readings of my own diaries led me on a journey of understanding and eventual recovery with the help of health professionals. I was in urgent need of counselling and psychiatric support. There was no quick fix. However, in 1998 a psychiatrist enabled me to retrace the first 25 years of my life and look at them anew in her presence.

What I discovered: I had a narcissistic mother, who, after her marriage collapsed, had me placed in a Catholic orphanage when I was seven years old. She told me it was a poor boarding school and I believed her right up until 1998 when there was publicity about abuse in Australian institutions, one of which was the orphanage I attended. When growing up I suffered verbal, physical and psychological abuse from my mother. I was so fortunate to have a brother who supported me when times were tough.

Despite my mother's discouragement I continued my education, and when awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship I had to delay taking it up for two years due to lack of finances. In 1963, I commenced university – much to my mother's disgust. During my years there I suffered many deprivations and was compelled to take on part-time jobs to survive. I was too poor to buy books and spent long hours at the university library studying the set texts. A disastrous relationship caused such great distress that I failed one subject in the final year. Undeterred, I continued studying that subject in the evenings to complete my degree whilst I worked full-time during the day. In 1967 I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts Degree and found my true love. My husband George and I married that year. My memoir concludes with the lead-up to our wedding. George and I have been happily married for 44 years.

*Karen Wilson*

### Submitting your story...

The word limit for *My Story* is 700. This may not fully express your personal experience, perhaps no words can. Should your story be edited, we do not mean to diminish your personal experience, but to enable that experience to be shared within the limited space of our newsletter.



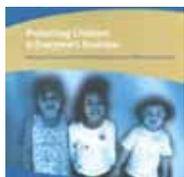
families  
australia

This month ASCA is including the following article written by Brian Babington, CEO of Families Australia. ASCA has been happy to work with Families Australia, which has championed the work of the Coalition of Organisations working with government around a National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Families Australia has also been the auspicing body for Alliance for Forgotten Australians, a sister organisation of ASCA's.

Families Australia works at the national level to promote family wellbeing.

Established 10 years ago, Families Australia

is a national, independent, not-for-profit, member-based organisation. We are especially focused on seeking policy solutions to assist the most vulnerable and marginalised families and individuals in society.



## Child safety and wellbeing

Perhaps the centrepiece of Families Australia's work to date has been its high-profile advocacy, in close collaboration with many other leading organisations, including Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA), for a national policy on protecting children. Ultimately, this work played a major part in the adoption in 2009 by the Council of Australian Governments of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 – Australia's first ever national strategy to tackle child abuse.

To help make the National Framework a success, Families Australia brought together, and continues to coordinate, the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, a consortium of more than 100 major national NGOs and prominent academics who work together to advance the National Framework.



## Seeking social justice

We are also proud to assist Forgotten Australians – a group of around 500,000 Australians who experienced institutional or other out-of-home care as children in the last century. By auspicing and working alongside our colleagues in the Alliance for Forgotten Australians since 2007, Families Australia has helped to generate greater awareness about the needs of this group.

In all our work, we have also sought to highlight the needs and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including in the development of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.



National

families week

15-21 May 2012

**Families Make  
All the Difference**

HELPING KIDS TO GROW AND LEARN

## Empowering communities

Families Australia runs National Families Week which has enabled the participation of hundreds of thousands of Australians in thousands of community-level events, all aimed at celebrating the vital role of families. National Families Week 2012 will be held from 15 to 21 May 2012 (coinciding with UN International Day of Families on Tuesday 15 May). The aim of National Families Week 2012 is to celebrate the vital role that families play. This year's theme is Families make all the difference: helping kids to grow and learn.

## Thought leadership

Families Australia's National Oration series was established to highlight issues facing families. The first of the three National Orations held to date was delivered by Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. In 2011, Professor McGorry AO, Executive Director, Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, and Professor of Youth Mental Health at the University of Melbourne, spoke passionately about ongoing needs in the field of mental health in Australia to a large audience at Parliament House, Canberra, including many political and community leaders.

## Influencing policy and practice

There has been a myriad of other, perhaps less well-known, achievements. Our advocacy in the lead-up to the last Federal election directly resulted in additional, practical support for grandparent carers. Ongoing work with Centrelink and Medicare advisory committees has influenced positively the way in which these organisations interact with families. Our work on the Carer Payment (child) review taskforce helped to pave the way for thousands of carers to receive more funding to assist children with a disability.

## The way we work

We place great importance on being politically impartial and working as a trusted facilitator between Government and the NGO community. Families Australia's achievements in its first decade have been made possible by the support of many individuals and organisations. In particular, we wish to thank Families Australia's Member organisations, Board members and staff.

Please view our website ([www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au)),  
follow us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Families-Australia/154267751362882>)  
or contact us at Families Australia, Suite 3, 7 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600  
email: [admin@familiesaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@familiesaustralia.org.au) telephone: 02 6273 4885

# Parliamentary Inquiry

*Continued from page 1.*

The Victorian parliamentary inquiry into sexual abuse within religious organisations is to be applauded. The long overdue announcement by the Baillieu government has come on the back of years of lobbying by victims, their families and victims' groups. The report into the appalling number of suicides by victims of clergy abuse in Victoria has delivered, it appears, the final momentum needed for the inquiry to be announced.

To those of us who work in the child abuse arena, such statistics, while always chilling, are not surprising. A 2008 Victorian study established that survivors of child sexual assault are up to 18 times more likely to complete suicide than people who haven't been abused. Child abuse is destructive. When victims don't receive the support and validation they need the quality of their lives can be badly affected. In some cases, lives are lost.

In Australia more than two million adults are living with the impacts of their childhood abuse. Many have described it as an epidemic steeped in secrecy, stigma and collective denial.

In Australia, Victoria is leading the way in shattering the secrecy, tackling the stigma and addressing the denial. It's a start. But it's now time for full transparency and real accountability across the board.

This inquiry must be followed by similar processes in other states and territories, and supported by a broad-based national inquiry. Such a process would be best served by a Royal Commission or judicial inquiry. It's a matter of what will wield greater power.

Make no mistake. This is an issue of power; the power of a perpetrator over a victim; the power of an adult over a child; the power of a person in a position of trust betraying that trust; the power of a member of the clergy abrogating their responsibility; the power of the strong over the vulnerable.

It has also been an issue of the power of religious institutions to operate by their own rules, which have, at times, put them at odds with the very laws that hold other organisations, institutions and citizens accountable.

Religious institutions are predominantly closed patriarchal systems. The more closed the organisation or institution, often the greater the investment in maintaining silence and secrecy. Perpetrators use secrecy and silence to hide their crimes and if secrecy fails, they attack the credibility of victims to try and ensure that no one listens. This shames victims all over again.

These systems have their own structures and hierarchies. In the case of the Catholic Church, these structures have prevented victims from pursuing claims against that institution, and internal Canon Law has taken precedence over civil law. In many religious institutions the hierarchical systems have perpetuated secrecy and denial, led by an inherent belief that the religious institution knows best and will handle the issue internally, thereby seeking to contain the shame and controversy around such crimes.

So why has it taken so long for any government to come forward and tackle this issue? Collectively, as a society we recoil from stories of abuse. Often we'd rather blame the victim for making us uncomfortable and for their own



victimisation. As a society we continue to betray those who have been abused in childhood, silencing and shaming them, minimising and negating their experiences. As bystanders we are complicit in these practices, and the shame so inappropriately adopted by victims belongs with us all.

Generations of survivors of clergy abuse have now spoken out. The time has come for us as a society to overcome our disgust, push aside the stigma and taboo around abuse and take action. It is within a conspiracy of silence and collective denial that the crime of child sexual assault thrives. It is enormously difficult for victims to speak out, both in childhood and as an adult. Silenced by shame, threats and the fear of not being believed, many victims don't ever tell their story. And some don't ever get the chance.

Thank you Premier Baillieu and your government for listening.

**Dr Cathy Kezelman | ASCA President**

## Telling Your Story

From time to time **ASCA** is approached by the media regarding different issues. Sometimes the media would like to talk to a survivor who has gone through a particular experience. Sometimes they want to interview a survivor of a certain age or gender; sometimes, a partner of a survivor or a couple. Telling your story can be an important step on the road to recovery as it helps to break the secrecy, shame and stigma survivors often carry. It can be both empowering and self-affirming, however, speaking to the media is a very public way of sharing your story and can also be daunting. It is important that you consider doing so very carefully and talk through what it means with those close to you first.

If on reflection you feel you would like to have the opportunity to be interviewed, and feel as though you have the support and wellbeing to do so, please contact **Cathy Kezelman** on [ckeelman@asca.org.au](mailto:ckeelman@asca.org.au) or phone **0425 812 197** to discuss this.

## ASCA Ambassadors Chrissie & Anthony Foster

Ninemsn | 17 April

The Victorian Government has announced an inquiry into religious institutions and their handling of child sexual abuse cases. This inquiry has been welcomed by Chrissie Foster and her husband, who have worked tirelessly towards justice for victims of Catholic clergy abuse. The inquiry has been welcomed by victims groups, including **ASCA**, although there are concerns that it may not go far enough without the powers of a Royal Commission or judicial inquiry.

After years of secrecy and cover-ups of child sex abuse by the Catholic Church, (Chrissie Foster) is hopeful a Victorian parliamentary inquiry will expose the full extent of abuse suffered by children.

Ms Foster's daughter died of a medication overdose after being abused by a priest, the late Father Kevin O'Donnell.

She said an inquiry was a step in the right direction.

"We've been on this for 16 years," she said.

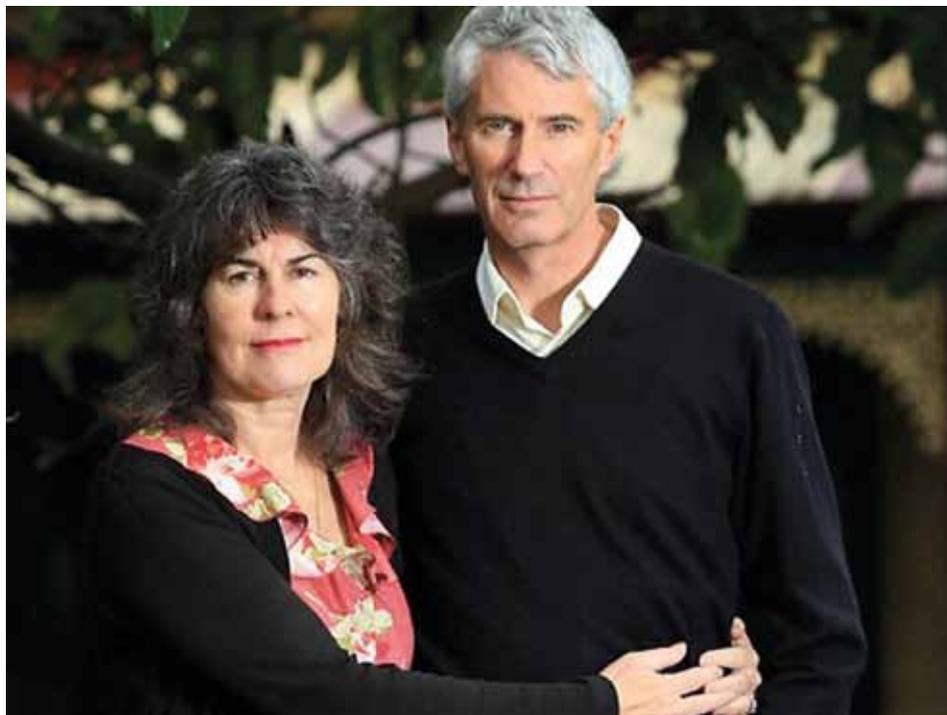
"This is a wonderful day to see the government stepping in to make something happen, that the church will be held accountable for what it's done in the past to children.

"These are our children and my daughter is dead because of what Father Kevin O'Donnell did to her and he was moved on.

"They knew about him in 1946, 1958, 1984 and still he was left there."

Ms Foster said the church must be made accountable for failing to deal adequately with complaints, assuring parents the problem was solved when often they just moved the offender on in secret.

Husband Anthony Foster said there were several deficiencies with the inquiry's terms of reference, which he hoped would



be addressed to allow a full and proper investigation.

Lawyer Vivian Waller, who represents 45 victims who are suing the church, said a royal commission or judicial inquiry would have been better.

But she hoped a parliamentary inquiry would be comprehensive enough and that the archdiocese of Melbourne would be forced to reveal the number of complaints and how it's handled by them.

Wayne Chamley, from Broken Rites which helps church-related abuse victims, was disappointed the government had not set up a royal commission.

"It's very disappointing that a parliamentary inquiry is not going to have the teeth to get

right to the bottom of what has been going on for the last 40 years at least," Mr Chamley told reporters.

The group believes investigations have at times been compromised, including due to a lack of police resources.

"The St John of God order had a minimum of 12 active pedophiles operating for 25 years. Not a single person has ever been charged," Mr Chamley said.

Cathy Kezelman, president of Adults Surviving Child Abuse, said a broad inquiry was needed and for too long... institutions such as the Catholic Church perpetuated cover-ups, leading to more victims and deaths.

Other victims groups described it as a step forward and long overdue.

## Letters to Editor

The Australian | 20th April

### Scrutiny of abuse

The announcement of Victoria's inquiry into child sexual assault by religious and other non-government organisations is welcome. It is not about dwelling on the past; it is about understanding the power dynamics within religious systems that have led to so many children being abused over such a long period.

It is about listening to victims and having full access to records. It is about understanding why many institutions put themselves and their clergy before victims.

This is not a witch-hunt or church bashing. Lives have been ruined; lives have been lost. This inquiry must lead the way for national scrutiny.

**Cathy Kezelman, Adults Surviving Child Abuse**

# ASCA Activities

## End of Financial Year Appeal

*ASCA needs your help untangling the knot of child abuse*

Much of ASCA's work is funded by government grants and public donations. The recent economic climate has seen government funding become very tight in the not-for-profit sector and often project based. So we are more reliant than ever on donations from supporters.

**Your donation helps in many ways and here are just a few:**

- \$50 will fund a trauma counsellor on ASCA's 1300 professional support line for one hour
- \$100 will fund 50 Breaking Free newsletters
- \$250 will allow one survivor to attend a life-affirming *Creating New Possibilities* workshop
- \$500 will fund the 1300 professional support line for a day

To donate **NOW** or sign up for a regular monthly donation, please visit the ASCA home page at [www.asca.org.au](http://www.asca.org.au) and click on the orange *Donate Now* button.

ASCA is a registered charity and donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.



donate  
now

## Be our hero! Fundraise for ASCA!

Visit the Everyday Hero website to see upcoming public events that you might enter and elect **ASCA** as your fundraising charity. Go to <http://charity.everydayhero.com.au/events/>

**Step 1:** Choose an event and register yourself.

**Step 2:** Choose **ASCA** as your charity for fundraising.

**Step 3:** Create your own Hero page.

**Step 4:** Invite friends and family to support you.

**Step 5:** Participate!

## ASCA Advisory Panel

*Lenaire Seager, Area Clinical Coordinator, Health Care*

ASCA is pleased to welcome Lenaire Seager to its Advisory Panel. Lenaire is a registered nurse currently working as the Area Clinical Coordinator at the Trauma and Dissociation Unit, Belmont Private Hospital. She has been there since its inception in 1997 and has been an integral part of the ongoing development of the unit's program. She is also interested in the research projects that are often conducted within the unit.

## ASCA President Auditions for TED 2013

Cathy Kezelman speaks out about the trauma of child abuse and asks for a shift in attitude. Check out the audition video entry by searching '[ascaorg](http://www.asca.org.au)' on YouTube.



## Swimming Upstream

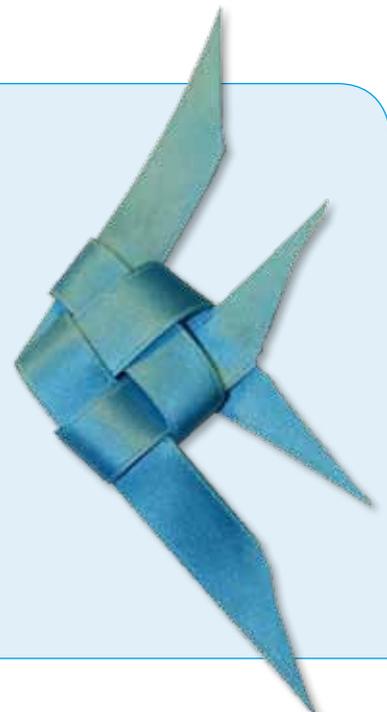
### *A story-telling & weaving artwork initiative*

In preparation for ASCA's 2012 national day, South Sydney Uniting Church is planning a special presentation in addition to its usual prayer service. The aim is to bring members of the community together to help untangle the knot of child abuse.

**There are different ways in which you can be involved:**

- Come along and weave blue ribbons into origami fish including any words or messages at SSUC, 56a Raglan Street, Waterloo, on Saturday 5 May, 2-5pm, **OR**
- Share aspects of your story for anonymous presentation by calling **Alana Valentine** on **0416 003 798**.

Sharing stories and weaving together is a way of demonstrating unity, hope and recovery.



## Workshops for Health Professionals

Our workshop, Best Practice for Working with Adults Surviving Child Abuse, is designed specifically for health care professionals and is suitable for counsellors, psychotherapists, social workers, psychologists, clinical psychologists, GPs and psychiatrists.

### This workshop covers:

- Understanding abuse and its impacts
- Coping strategies and defence mechanisms used by survivors of child abuse
- Common impacts of child abuse
- Treatment models and best practice guidelines for working with adults surviving child abuse

**Full-day workshop:** 9.00am – 5.00pm

**Cost:** \$250 or \$190 concession

### Professional development endorsement:

**APS Endorsed Activity:**

7 CPD hours

**AASW Approved Activity:**

14 AASW points

**ACMHN Endorsed Activity:**

7 ACMHN CPE points

**Register online:**

[www.asca.org.au/workshops](http://www.asca.org.au/workshops)

Date	Location
18 May	Sydney
25 May	Melbourne
01 June	Adelaide
15 June	Canberra
22 June	Brisbane
29 June	Perth

## Workshops for Survivors

Creating New Possibilities workshops are designed specifically for adult survivors of child abuse.

ASCA's workshops give survivors and those supporting them information about child abuse and how it is linked to a range of survival and coping strategies, as well as tools for recovery.

These half-day workshops (9.30am - 12.30pm) are open to all adult survivors and their supporters.

**Cost\*\*:** \$50 or \$25 concession.

\*\* ASCA's philosophy is for our Creating New Possibilities workshops to be accessible to all survivors. If you are experiencing financial difficulties please do contact us.

register  
now

Date	Location
19 May	Sydney
26 May	Melbourne
23 June	Brisbane

### Did you know...

...ASCA operates a **1300 Professional Support Line?**

Staffed by professional counsellors, the support line is available to survivors and those supporting survivors such as family, friends, health professionals, community workers and volunteers.

Call 1300 657 380

## Free Workshops for Fairfield City residents & workers

### Community Workers workshop

**4 May & June 1\* | 8.30am – 5.00pm**

Trauma-informed training providing information and tools for workers interacting with clients who have experienced complex trauma in childhood.

\*May 4 is confirmed and online bookings available now – June 1 to be confirmed – please register your interest to [events@asca.org.au](mailto:events@asca.org.au). See the Fairfield City council website to see if your suburb is eligible: [www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au) (search for suburbs)

### Survivors "Creating New Possibilities" workshop

**9 June | men only | 9.30am – 12.30pm**

**16 June | women only | 9.30am – 12.30pm**

Focussing on safety, self-care and seeking support, these workshops help survivors connect their childhood trauma (from abuse, neglect, family violence/dysfunction) to their behaviours and feelings in the present, while providing tools for positive change.

**Register online:** [asca.org.au/workshops](http://asca.org.au/workshops)

**Venue:** Cabra-Vale Diggers Club, 1 Bartley Street, Canley Vale NSW

**Cost:** Grant funded – free of charge - for Fairfield residents or workers.

## ASCA In-house workshops: tailored to your needs

ASCA in-house workshops for health professionals, community workers and/or volunteers provide current information incorporating best practice guidelines for working with adults surviving child abuse.

Your team can also request topics of interest to your organisation and focus on issues pertinent to your clients and practice. Whilst workshops are generally one day in duration, two-day and half-day workshops can be arranged.

In-house workshops for survivors can also be arranged on request.

Recent in-house workshops have successfully been delivered for Stepping Out, Lyndon Community and Sydney Women's Counselling Centre.

"Clients responded positively to the well prepared information and compassionate approach indicating they felt safe and respected throughout. We are thrilled with the outcomes and are working toward targeted fund-raising for future opportunities!"

For more information about in-house workshops, please call **02 8920 3611** or email [events@asca.org.au](mailto:events@asca.org.au)