

# Breaking free

asca

Adults Surviving Child Abuse

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

## Research reveals reasons for hope

### ASCA Practice Guidelines



ASCA's Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery will be completed and presented to DoHA, Federal Department of Health and Ageing, at the end of May. They will be released in the second half of the year and disseminated nationally to workers and practitioners. We would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of Dr Pam Stavropoulos who researched and wrote ASCA's Practice Guidelines.

The following information, drawn from the draft of the guidelines, was used for a new funding application to DoHA, lodged recently.

More than two million Australian adults have experienced childhood physical or sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> When emotional abuse and neglect, the impacts of living with or witnessing family violence and/or dysfunction are added, the percentage is even higher.

Complex trauma, which occurs often as a result of adverse interpersonal experiences,<sup>2</sup>

such as childhood abuse, is more common than 'single-incident' trauma,<sup>3</sup> yet is routinely unrecognised. Trauma (complex) can affect mental and physical health, wellbeing and behaviour. Its effects can also be intergenerational; children can be negatively impacted by the unresolved trauma of their parents.

The ACE study, the largest ongoing study of the impacts of adverse childhood events and household dysfunction, has established that adverse childhood experiences are 'vastly more common than recognised or acknowledged', and that they powerfully impact both mental and physical health a half-century later.<sup>4</sup>

Research documented in ASCA's Practice Guidelines brings hope and optimism. It shows the capacity for recovery at all ages. Just as damaging experiences cause brain changes that are negative for functioning, new, different and positive experiences can cause changes conducive to health.

With appropriate working through, the trauma of even very early experience can be resolved<sup>5</sup> with restoration of a sense of safety and wellbeing, capacity to engage in healthy relationships, and ability to enjoy life. When parents have resolved their trauma their children also do well.<sup>6</sup>

Supporting complex trauma consumers requires specialised knowledge and skills. Understanding the impacts of trauma on the brain, its physiology and extensive effects is vital in psycho-education inherent to effective trauma therapy.<sup>7</sup> Untrained practitioners can inadvertently exacerbate reactions and/or precipitate re-traumatisation.

ASCA's education and training workshops for health professionals inform, educate and train practitioners so they can better support the survivors who seek their help. Once implemented, the principles developed in the Practice Guidelines will change practice for practitioners and services to help survivors towards recovery.

**Dr Cathy Kezelman | ASCA President**

*See page 2 for references.*

**ASCA workshops for survivors and health care professionals. Register now!**

**See back page for details.**

# From the Editor

Welcome to the May issue of *Breaking Free*. This month we take a look at some of ASCA's key service offerings – our Best Practice Guidelines, workshops and 1300 support line. All of these services are informed by specific expertise in the impacts of childhood trauma on survivors' biology and biography. Many survivors of childhood abuse continue to carry a burden of shame and guilt, confusion and sadness, which persistently eats away at their self-esteem and sense of identity.

On the *My Story* page, common experiences of survivors are summarised in an extract from Van Loon and Kralik, which also highlights the hope of recovery. Survivors are encouraged to persevere with the difficult process of recovery. Help is absolutely essential, but of course, often difficult to ask for. We do know that regaining a sense of safety is the vital first step in recovery. Safety is not merely the absence of threat; it also requires the presence of support. Whether that support is in the form of professional or personal relationships, or ideally, both,



empathic connection with others creates a fertile ground for healing. One workshop participant recently commented: "My mother gave birth to me, but my therapist gave me life." ASCA hopes to facilitate these kinds of healing relationships through our services, so that more survivors can be empowered to take back their lives.

See the back page for workshop details. Tune in to ASCA's media presence in ASCA in the News on page 6 and find out how you can contribute to ASCA's fundraising efforts on page 7.

**Kath O'Sullivan | Editor**

## Taking care of business

Developments continue at the business end of ASCA with several major grant applications completed, increased 1300 line hours, and workshops underway.

I would like to acknowledge the enormous efforts of all those involved in working on the detailed grant submissions.

Workshops held in Sydney this month were well attended by health professionals (from as far away as Cairns) and survivors. Both workshops received excellent feedback from participants who were particularly appreciative of facilitator Michelle Everett's responsive style.

The first Swimming Upstream event on May 5, in which survivors came together to weave ribbons into fish and share stories, was a great success attracting 15 participants. See page 7 for details of how to get involved next time.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that ASCA has employed three new counsellors, all with extensive experience and training in trauma counselling, for the 1300 professional support line.

**Margaret Price | COO ASCA**



### ASCA Administration

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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.

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### 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

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[www.facebook.com/groups/adults\\_survivingchildabuse](http://www.facebook.com/groups/adults_survivingchildabuse)

### 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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<sup>1</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>2</sup> Ford (2005); cited in Courtois & Ford, 'Defining and Understanding Complex Trauma'

<sup>3</sup> The majority of people who seek treatment for trauma-related problems have histories of multiple traumas, van der Kolck, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Nature of Trauma', in Marion F. Solomon & Daniel J. Siegel, ed. *Healing Trauma* (New York: Norton, 2003), p.172.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent J. Felitti, 'The Relationship of Adverse Childhood Experiences to Adult Health: Turning Gold into Lead', *The Permanente Journal* (Vol.6, No.1, 2002), p.45

<sup>5</sup> Daniel J. Siegel, citing Roisman et al, 2002, Phelps, Belskg, & Cmic, 1998, 'An Interpersonal Neurobiology of Psychotherapy', in Siegel & Solomon, ed. *Healing Trauma*, p.16

<sup>6</sup> Daniel J. Siegel 'An Interpersonal Neurobiology of Psychotherapy', in Siegel & Solomon, ed. *Healing Trauma*

<sup>7</sup> John Briere & C. Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation and Treatment* (London: Sage, 2006).

## A Common Story

**W**e have known what it's like to live with confusion and anxiety because these have been constant companions since we were first abused. We try to cope by being detached, denying what is happening, dissociating ourselves from the awful experiences as if they were happening to someone else.

We learn to put on masks so no-one can see the real us, because we are so ashamed of ourselves. We learn ways to ignore and pretend, or we numb away our suffering with alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, food, work and things like that. In that way we forget our pain for a while. We keep blaming ourselves, feeling responsible for our situation, believing something is wrong with us so we do not deserve to be happy, safe or loved.

We rarely feel safe in any relationship because the abuse we experience marks our lives with rejection, mistrust, low self-esteem, and a deep empty hole inside of us that nothing seems to fill. We are used to feeling hurt and different from other people so we lower our expectations of ourselves and others. We try to shut off our need for love, safety, belonging, joy and peace by toughening up. We either run away in our head or we actually run away from our families. Some of us have become overachievers and try to please everyone to prove we are OK. Some of us have been rebellious fighters to prove we are untouchable. We use these behaviours to keep safe, to escape and distance ourselves from potential harm and more pain.

As we look back we can see that some of our reactions have led us deeper along paths of loneliness, sickness and despair. We now recognise that we do not want to keep denying our past and compromising our potential. Our mind and our spirit eventually extract their toll, forcing us to face the truth and the pain that goes with the past. The good news is that facing the past allows us to reclaim the parts of our lives that we want to, so we can move into the future of our choosing.

We'd be lying if we said it was easy, because it's not. It is hard work. Sometimes it feels like it's too hard, too painful, unfair and just not worth it. We stumble and go forward and then drop back again, but looking back we can see we are healing. At times it's difficult to stick with the work. It's not easy to believe we can create change and scary to think of living in ways that are unfamiliar. We slip back into comfy old patterns and reuse drugs and alcohol. We give up on ourselves and others, thinking no-one can possibly understand our situation... but they can and they do, so keep working.

Recovering is slow work so celebrate each success and take courage because like us, you have been recruited into a life story that is not of your choosing and you can reclaim aspects of your self from that past story and create a future that you prefer.



(ASCA uses this passage in our training and workshops to help explain the common experiences of adult survivors. It is adapted from the story telling of survivors involved in a research project: van Loon, A. M., & Kralik, D. (2005c). *Reclaiming Myself after child sexual abuse SA*: RDNS Research Unit.)

### 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.

# ASCA Workshop Feedback

In addition to its workshops for survivors ASCA runs workshops for health professionals to help them better identify those who have experienced the trauma of child abuse and work with them towards recovery.

The Network of Drug and Alcohol Agencies, NSW (NADA) hosted a Trauma Informed Care and Practice event in December 2011. As part of that event, ASCA held a one-day training session delivered by Mark Griffiths and ASCA facilitators.

The NADA report on ASCA training follows:

## Best practice training: working with adult survivors of child abuse

### Mark Griffiths, Adults Surviving Child Abuse

Working with survivors of childhood abuse requires specialised training and can be challenging. Even though knowledge about the understanding of the biological and interpersonal consequences of childhood trauma has exploded over the past two decades, many training and treatment programs have not yet integrated the new information.

This training targeted frontline workers focusing on best practice for working with adult survivors of child abuse in a drug and alcohol setting.

The training package focused on the following topics:

- Understanding abuse
- Childhood responses to threat/coping strategies
- Coping into adulthood
- Impacts of childhood abuse
- Pathways through which adult health can be compromised
- Good practice guidelines for working with adults surviving child abuse.

Examples of good practice included:

- Providing a safe place for the client
- Ensuring client empowerment and collaboration
- Communicating and sustaining hope and respect
- Facilitating disclosure without overwhelming the client
- Being familiar with a number of different therapeutic tools and models
- Having a broad knowledge of trauma theory and providing the client with psycho-education
- Teaching clients adaptive coping strategies
- Teaching clients to monitor their thoughts and responses
- Teaching clients interpersonal and assertiveness skills.

## Training Feedback

Before the Working with Adult Survivors of Child Abuse Workshop, **50%** of participants rated their knowledge of best practice in working with adult survivors of child abuse as good or very good.

Following the workshop **100%** of participants rated their knowledge as good or very good.

**86%** of participants thought they would definitely use the information and resources provided during the training, **14%** said they would possibly use the information.

**100%** reported that the training had improved their ability to work with adult survivors of child abuse.

**100%** reported that the training had improved their confidence in working with adult survivors of child abuse.

**100%** of participants reported that it was very or somewhat likely that the training would lead to some improvement in the work of their organisation.

### Additional comments:

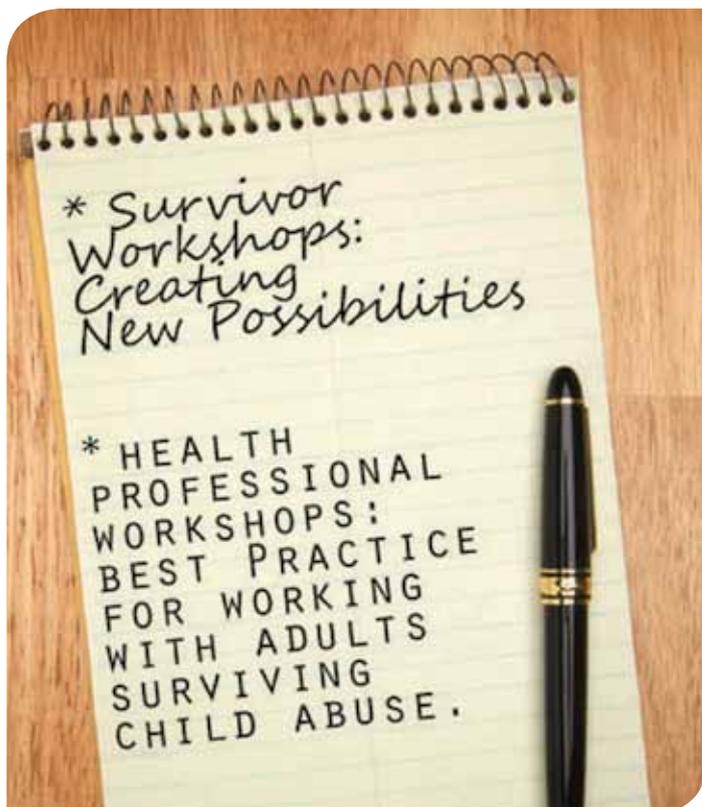
"I got so much out of today's training, very informative, concise and relevant. Trainer was very articulate and easy to follow."

"Found this helpful as I have always felt out of my depth when clients disclose childhood abuse, particularly sexual abuse. Now I have some tools to help me talk to/with people about it."

"Very informative, took away a lot of new ideas. Now need time to process and adapt to my position at work."

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

For more information about workshops currently scheduled for survivors as well as health professionals, please go to page 8.



# ASCA's 1300 Professional Support Line

ASCA's 1300 line is the only dedicated professional phone service providing:

- short term professional counselling support, information, education and referral for adult survivors;
- information, advice and support to supporters; and
- information, de-briefing and support to health professionals.

The service has the only national referral database of health practitioners with appropriate expertise and experience to provide ongoing face-to-face counselling for adult survivors of complex trauma from childhood.

ASCA's 1300 line has five different counsellors sharing shifts between Monday and Friday. They are all experienced in trauma and in providing professional support to survivors.

In keeping with professional standards ASCA provides regular supervision for its 1300 counsellors. Working with people who are traumatised and may be distressed is rewarding, and it can also be demanding. Just as self-care is vital for those who have experienced trauma, it is also important for counsellors and those who seek to support trauma survivors. ASCA conforms to high standards of ethical and professional practice, one requirement of which is regular supervision.



Professional Support Line  
**1300 657 380**

*"I am 48 years old now and there is simply not a day goes by that I don't carry the burden of what my father had put me through from the age of 10 years old. Anyway I have learnt to be really positive and place my fears, hatred and turmoil into more positive thoughts...*

*I rang and spoke to ASCA late last year about becoming a member and spoke to the nicest gentleman concerning the issues I was enduring, after the phone call I felt really great and wasn't down on myself at all. He was very sincere and treated me with the upmost respect and dignity."*

*Anonymous Caller | ASCA's 1300 Professional Support Line*

## A new champion for young people

This month the Gillard Government announced the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner. This appointment was an objective under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. ASCA is a member of the 112-member Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, which Families Australia coordinates. Last month's *Breaking Free* featured Families Australia and its work.

Families Australia's CEO Brian Babington stated that 'The National Children's Commissioner will have a vitally important role in highlighting the aspirations, needs and interests of children and young people, standing up when things go wrong, and championing what works well for children and young people.'

'Families Australia expects the Commissioner to play an active role in helping children reach their full potential, complementing the vital role played by parents, carers and families,' he said.

ASCA joins Families Australia in supporting the appointment of the National Children's Commissioner as a step towards addressing the ongoing abuse and neglect of Australian children.

For more information about Families Australia visit their website: [www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au), or contact Families Australia, Suite 3, 7 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600, telephone: 02 6273 4885 or email: [admin@familiesaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@familiesaustralia.org.au)



families  
australia

# ASCA in the News

Ninemsn | 9 May



**Between 10 and 15 child abuse offences are committed in NSW every day and most of the perpetrators are known to their victims.**

"We conduct 4500 investigations per year in NSW in relation to child abuse," said Acting NSW Police Deputy Commissioner of Specialist Operations, David Hudson.

Police [have] launched the renamed Child Abuse Squad, made up of detectives committed to investigating serious cases of child abuse.

Mr Hudson is calling for child abuse to be "high on the agenda" and says the new name reflects the horrific nature of the squad's work.

"Yes, it is a confronting name, but it's confronting work they do," he said at the launch.

Children are almost always telling the truth in reported child abuse cases, a national support network says.

"Studies show that in 98 per cent of all child abuse cases which are reported, children are telling the truth," Adults Surviving Child Abuse president Dr Cathy Kezelman said.

"Many children carry the shame and self-blame of their abuse into their adult life."

Dr Kezelman said about half of child sexual assault victims never tell anyone and many do not reveal it until they are adults.

"As a society we need to speak openly about abuse, overcome the stigma and taboo (and) teach children about how best to protect themselves."

Dr Kezelman also said it was necessary to educate the community so that all suspected child abuse cases are reported to the authorities.

## Letters to Editor

Sydney Morning Herald | 21 April

**The damage done from the trauma of child abuse needs to be acknowledged and victims need not only validation and justice but also sustained and informed professional and community support.**

The case of priest Brian Spillane highlights the grooming behaviour that paedophiles use to ingratiate themselves with victims' families to gain predatory access to victims. Spillane's assertion that he is 'a hugger and kisser, a man at ease with families and their children' highlights the minimising rationalisation abusers use to justify their crimes. All 'glowing testimonials to good character' are ablated by the despicable acts of child sexual assault.

Miss M., one of his victims spoke out courageously of the devastation his crimes had reaped on her life. It is not about hugging and kissing but about the damage the trauma of child abuse causes to the developing brain and its long-term impacts. A custodial sentence of nine years is apparently substantial. Yet it alone cannot repair the damage reaped by this crime

**With the right help survivors can recover. Validation and justice, as in this case, are a start but survivors also need sustained and informed professional and community support to regain their health and wellbeing**

*Cathy Kezelman, Adults Surviving Child Abuse*

## 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 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 grant 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.

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/community-fundraising-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!**

## Swimming Upstream

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

In preparation for ASCA's 2012 national day, South Sydney Uniting Church is holding a series of special events facilitated by playwright Alana Valentine, to bring members of the community together to help untangle the knot of child abuse.

Following the success of the first weaving and storytelling event on May 5, further gatherings will be held on:  
**June 16, July 21 and August 18 | 2–5 pm.**

If you would you like to participate, come along on any of these dates and weave blue ribbons into origami fish including any words or messages at SSUC, 56a Raglan Street Waterloo NSW 2017: **Saturday May 5, 2012 2–5 pm**

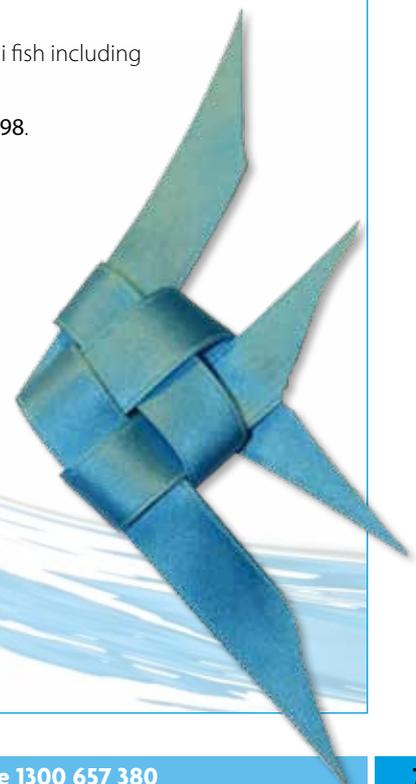
You can also share aspects of your story for anonymous presentation by calling **Alana Valentine 0416003798.**

***"The telling of stories and weaving of communities together helps us unite in bringing messages of hope and recovery."***

Alana has proposed a combined visual art and performance activity to be conducted in the lead up to ASCA's national day in 2012 and 2013. It will comprise a visual art installation and a public reading of the stories of adult survivors of child abuse. This project will comprise two elements:

1. the weaving of thousands of small 'ribbon fish' with both blue ribbons and ribbons of text gathered from the stories and statements of adult survivors of child abuse, and
2. the gathering, transcribing and presentation of stories and statements of adult survivors of child abuse.

Alana Valentine is a recognised Australian playwright. Her plays *'Parramatta Girls'* and *'Run Rabbit Run'* are currently on the NSW HSC Drama Syllabus. Her most recent play *'Head Full of Love'*, set at the world-renowned Alice Springs Beanie Festival, was performed in English and Pitjantjatjara at the 2010 Darwin Festival and then toured to Cairns and Alice Springs. It was nominated for a 2011 Queensland Premier's Literary Award. Alana is currently the recipient of a Literature Board Fellowship from the Australia Council for the Arts.



## 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
01 June	Adelaide
15 June	Canberra
22 June	Brisbane
29 June	Perth

register now

## Free Workshops for Fairfield City residents & workers

### Community Workers workshop

**June 1\* | 9.00am – 5.00pm**

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

### 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.

\*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)

## 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.

Date	Location
23 June	Brisbane
18 August	Darwin

register now

**Stay tuned for more workshop dates being released soon for the second half of 2012.**

## 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)