

Breaking free

asca

Adults Surviving Child Abuse

The Newsletter of Adults Surviving Child Abuse | ISSN 1836-6899 | November & December 2012

ASCA makes history

The launch of **Blue Knot Day 2012** was historic.

Monday October 29, was ASCA's inaugural **Blue Knot Day**. It expanded on our prior national day, Forget-Me-Knot Day, and now honours survivors of all forms of childhood trauma – abuse in all its forms, neglect, community and family violence and other adverse childhood events.

On **Blue Knot Day** the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform, The Hon. Mark Butler MP, launched ASCA's **Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery**. He commended ASCA on developing a resource that helps our understanding of the impacts of childhood trauma on mental health.

The Minister also indicated his intention for the Government to work with ASCA to build on the crucial first step provided by the Guidelines towards improving services for adults who have experienced complex trauma as children. We are pleased to say that these conversations are progressing. We would like to thank the Minister and his department for helping adult survivors of childhood trauma to find health, wellbeing and pathways to recovery. To read the Minister's Press Release related to the launch of the Guidelines [click here](#).

The parliamentary briefing event, hosted by Senator Matt Thistlethwaite and Senator Catryna Bilyk was well attended by parliamentarians, staff, community members, organisational representatives, ASCA members and supporters. We would particularly like to thank Senator Thistlethwaite and Senator Bilyk and their staff for facilitating such a successful event.

Co-authors of the Guidelines, Dr Cathy Kezelman, ASCA President, and Dr Pam Stavropoulos, ASCA consultant in Clinical Research,



Senator Matt Thistlethwaite; Senator Catryna Bilyk; Hon Mark Butler MP; Dr Pam Stavropoulos, Senator Penny Wright; Dr Cathy Kezelman

officialated on behalf of ASCA along with John Teer, ASCA Chairperson. Cathy and Pam spoke at the event. Cathy highlighted the public health challenge of trauma and the unique opportunity for the research in the Guidelines to inform policy reform to enable adult survivors with unresolved trauma to find the right help towards recovery.

Having just returned from Los Angeles where she showcased the Guidelines at the annual conference of the International Society for Study of Trauma and Dissociation, Pam spoke about how ASCA and Australia are leading the world in this area. Her week in LA provided many opportunities for international collaboration, building on links already established as a result of the Guidelines' endorsement process.

Other countries are looking to us for the way forward. Pam quoted a large US longitudinal study, the *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)* study, which has established the physical and mental health impacts of adverse childhood experiences – even 50 years later. Studies like this and the positive evidence from neuroscience indicate that it is time to put the research from the Guidelines into practice as a matter of urgency.

STOP PRESS

ASCA welcomes Prime Minister's announcement of national Royal Commission into child sexual abuse

On Monday 12 November 2012, the Prime Minister announced she will be recommending to the Governor-General the establishment of a Royal Commission into

institutional responses to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in Australia.

ASCA is working with government as this process unfolds, and will be available to provide advice, counsel, as well as professional services and training on an ongoing basis. The Commission is likely to begin its work early in 2013.

If you wish to be kept advised on the establishment of the Royal Commission, or if you would like your details passed on to the Secretariat to the Royal Commission, you may provide an email or postal contact address through one of the following ways:

- Phone the national call centre on: 1800 099 340
- Email: royalcommissionsecretariat@pmc.gov.au
- Write to the following address:
Secretariat, Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse PO Box 6555, CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

For additional information or counseling support please call ASCA on 1300 657 380 or email counsellors@asca.org.au. ASCA's 1300 Professional Support Line is expanding its hours of operation as a result of short term funding from the government to help meet the increased demand.

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From the Editor

Welcome to the final issue of *Breaking Free* for 2012. This bumper November/December issue is packed with news of a very eventful time for ASCA. Please note that the January/February edition will also be a combined issue. The media stories included are merely a glimpse of the extensive news coverage generated by **Blue Knot Day**, the launch of ASCA's *Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care & Service Delivery*, and of course, the recently announced Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse. ASCA has been advocating a Royal Commission for some time, so this news is most welcome.



The holiday season can be an intense time. Families get together, emotions run high and interpersonal pressures mount. For survivors of childhood trauma, this time of year can be particularly difficult. It's important to know and respect your own limits around being with family and socialising. If you are feeling vulnerable, it is really okay not to attend a particular function, or to attend only for a limited time and have an exit strategy. Make a list of safe people you can contact if you need to debrief, and try not to let visiting relatives throw the usual routines and rituals that support you. Mindfulness offers some effective tools for managing triggers which may come in handy. Taking an observing stance, you can notice what happens in your body when your buttons are pushed. Describe the sensations to yourself. Notice the thoughts that arise, and label them as thoughts. Remember that this is what your brain does when you are triggered; it creates certain thoughts. Those thoughts, often self-blaming or judging, are not necessarily the truth.

Finally, make sure you have as much support around you as possible. Schedule extra therapy sessions if you can, call the ASCA 1300 line for professional support (See hours for holiday coverage below), call Lifeline if in crisis, meditate or pursue whatever activities help you care for yourself and spend time with safe people. Acknowledge your strengths and even though you don't always feel as though better times are to come, this too shall pass.

Kath O'Sullivan | Editor

Taking care of business



It has been a very exciting and busy time at ASCA with the success of **Blue Knot Day**, the launch of the Guidelines, as well as the calling of the Royal Commission and extensive media coverage. ASCA is engaged in ongoing conversations with government around the substantial need for informed services for adult survivors, and this need has been brought into stark relief as the Royal Commission is being set up.

As we go to press ASCA has received \$75,000 from FaHCSIA to help build the capacity of the 1300 line from December-February 2013. We are most grateful for this funding and hope to see it matched by core recurrent funding which will enable ASCA to sustain and expand its much needed professional services to bring health and wellbeing to Australian adult survivors of childhood trauma.

As we begin to wind down 2012, a reminder to readers that the 1300 line will be operating with expanded hours to reflect funding increase until December 21st. Counsellors will be also be available at different times over Christmas/New Year holiday period with all calls returned as soon as possible.

Chris Hartley | Chief Operating Officer

Continued from page 1

Please be assured that all of your calls and emails are important to us, and if we are not able to answer them directly we will be return messages as soon as possible.

Information regarding the Royal Commission, ASCA's response to the government consultation paper about the Terms of Reference, and ASCA's extensive media commentary, can be found at www.asca.org.au. Click on Information on Royal Commission.

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Donations can be made online at 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 (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.

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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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Coming to terms with the truth

In our world, if a person has experienced child abuse, we are encouraged to seek help, to face it, to set healthy boundaries (no easy feat!) with our perpetrators, to (forgive or) have the right **not** to forgive, to learn how to regard ourselves with respect, to redefine what family means, to stop feeling guilty and ashamed, to be **our authentic selves**, to be happy and to heal, with or without our perpetrators. Every single step laid out is unbelievably difficult. These issues have grown into the bone marrow of abuse survivors' lives. To really process the steps of healing, means to completely strip bare all the protective layers and ways that we coped that have helped us to survive. And that is hard.

Every issue becomes increasingly confusing if the perpetrators are our parents. The love we hold for our parents means that reporting them is rarely an option. I never ever wanted to report my Dad. No way. I love him. I struggled with finding that place. All the good that a person does cannot wipe out the bad, and any bad that a person does, cannot destroy the good. I wanted to hate him, and at times, I did. It is these feelings that stop the reporting of incest. If a child or adult survivor of abuse cannot disclose, then there is nobody that will. This is how it goes unnoticed, unrecorded and passes into our society like a dripping poison that, unless addressed, slowly kills the survivor's internal world, one unwanted memory at a time.

We, as a society, have decided that child abuse is not acceptable but we continue to condone it. This is what gives abusers power. It is the media that brings it to our attention, but our friends and families rarely want to know or hear. They want us to be better, but not many people want to take the steps to stop the secrecy. I had a friend who told me that her mother had suspected my abuse, but did nothing, said nothing. This friend's mother was one of my favourite people and I found myself unable to talk to her for years. This friend's mother is a reflection of us all. In Australia, we have a 'keep quiet and suck it up' attitude which stops us from evolving. Perhaps it is out of respect that nobody is comfortable to talk about it, as they see we have enormous pain and they don't want to bring up old wounds. Perhaps they are simply waiting for us to be ready to disclose and express our pain. I find it very difficult to talk about in person; although in writing I am able to share everything. Perhaps it is the level of discomfort that stops me from speaking openly about it. In any case, it has to change.

My mother turned my abuse story into a victim story for herself. She claimed repeatedly that she had done nothing wrong and had read stories of how victims are angrier with the non-abusive parent, for what she declared as 'no apparent reason'. She said that my anger was misguided. My Dad turned my story into his own victim story as well, claiming that he has needed psychological help since childhood. They left me out of this picture. They repeated their abuse pattern, by advocating their needs, maintaining my experience as nothing of concern. I repeated the abusive thinking pattern as well, by following the



idea that 'if I act better, do better, then they will also act better and do better', just as the child thinks 'if am really good, then it will stop'.

The issue of forgiveness for a survivor of child abuse is a very difficult idea. I have struggled with forgiveness and its role in my life. To **not** forgive can be as healing as forgiving. I have not understood where forgiveness lives in my life in regard to my parents, and that is my choice. On some days I have Buddha-like compassion, seeing them as sick people who knew no better. On other days, I remember that my Dad said the neighbours would put him in jail if they were to see him, making me realise that he did know better, and I know that I have to hold strong, to care for the little girl inside whose needs were ignored.

By Angelique | Survivor

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.

Blue Knot Day 2012



Maggie Dawkins receives her award from John Teer

Blue Knot Day, ASCA's national awareness day was celebrated between October 29 and November 4 this year. On Blue Knot Day we ask all Australians to unite in support of the four to five million Australians who have experienced complex trauma from childhood.

The aims of Blue Knot Day are:

- Raising awareness
- Tackling stigma
- Fostering hope
- Promoting recovery

This year we established the inaugural Blue Knot Award to recognise an individual who has upheld the aims of Blue Knot Day - someone who truly inspires communities to unite in support of survivors.

Every year this award will recognise a person who stands out in their community,

or nationally, either by breaking the silence around child abuse, eroding stigma, or helping survivors to overcome their shame; who fosters hope and optimism and promotes pathways towards recovery, health and wellbeing

The inaugural Blue Knot Award 2012 was presented to Maggie Dawkins by John Teer, ASCA Chair, at a Blue Knot Dinner for corporate supporters in Sydney on November 1.

"For courageously speaking out about abuse in her community and her ongoing support of survivors"

Maggie Dawkins, wife of former Labour treasurer John Dawkins, was a group leader for Westrek - a WA government youth training and employment project in 1985. At the time she tried to lift the lid on the actions of notorious serial pedophile Dennis McKenna in the small

community of Katanning. She was silenced and ostracised and, as a result, McKenna continued to perpetrate against child victims in his care as hostel warden at St Andrews Hostel. The Blaxell Inquiry, which reported recently, exonerated Maggie's actions. Throughout the Inquiry she has continued to support victims in the town and, 27 years later, has been vindicated.

Maggie alerted a town to the actions of an insidious perpetrator. She courageously spoke out against the crowd, tackling the stigma of abuse and the secrecy and silence that perpetuates it. In so doing she raised awareness about its existence. During subsequent court cases and the Blaxell Inquiry decades later, she supported victims and continues to support the community in an ongoing basis.



BLUE KNOT AWARD

ASCA releases 1300 data

ASCA's 1300 line provides short term counselling support and information to adult survivors of childhood trauma and those who support them personally and professionally.

The 1300 line has been operating for four hours per day, Monday to Friday for some time but that's changing. The short term funding just received will allow us to expand operation on the line over the next few months. The announcement of the Royal Commission makes ASCA's service even more critical. It is the only specialised service for adult survivors of childhood trauma in Australia, and is staffed by both male and female counsellors. Ongoing funding is much needed to meet demand and provide survivors with the informed professional support they need to find pathways to recovery, and provide other callers with support and information.

ASCA's 1300 line is now supported by an electronic database, on which data is recorded during calls. All data is kept strictly confidential and callers' privacy is protected at all times.

Several students from Macquarie University recently entered a backlog of manually collected data onto the database. The collective data was analysed and initial results were released on Blue Knot Day. Reports will be further refined over time and used to help develop service responses informed by callers' needs.

Initial data analysis validated prior research. It showed that the vast majority of survivors are abused in the home and family by someone they know. Sadly, a significant percentage of survivors are abused by multiple perpetrators. In terms of impacts, again the data confirms prior research: 56 percent of callers who spoke about the impacts of their abuse reported multiple impacts. Effects on mental and physical health, relationships, employment, alcohol and drug use, suicidality, and contact with the criminal justice system were documented in substantial percentages - again figures that validate prior research.

The 1300 research affirms the need to implement the research presented in the Guidelines to enable pathways to recovery.

Blue Knot Day 2012



Alana Valentine, author of Swimming Upstream and award winning playwright speaks with Julie McCrossin

On November 1 ASCA held a small dinner for corporate supporters in the premises of KPMG in Sydney. We would like to thank John Teer and KPMG for hosting the event with a very big thank you to Julie McCrossin for her exceptional job as the MC for the night.

It was a wonderful evening of light and shade, showcasing the work of the Guidelines, and a mini-interview with Dr Cathy Kezelman, Dr Pam Stavropoulos (co-authors) and Prof Warwick Middleton, member of ASCA's Advisory Panel and enthusiastic advocate for the Guidelines. Warwick and his wife Catherine were special guests for the evening. Warwick was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation: "In appreciation of your outstanding dedication to survivors of complex trauma as a clinician, educator, researcher, author and advocate. A true pioneer."

A poignant interview with Chrissie and Anthony Foster, long-standing ASCA Ambassadors, spoke to the tragedy of child sexual abuse and the importance of advocacy for real change with particular focus on the current Victorian inquiry into child sexual assault in religious and other organisations.

Maggie Dawkins, the recipient of our inaugural Blue Knot Award, spoke of the need to continue to speak out and break the silence when children are at risk of harm or being harmed. She said awareness of abuse should never stop a conversation but rather begin one. We wholeheartedly agree.



Jackie and John Teer with John Hubby, KPMG director

BLUE KNOT DINNER

Rose Parker, our new Ambassador, moved us all as she spoke of her road to recovery. She highlighted the belief in her shown by others, her inherent strength, her passion for music and recovery, and her work as an Occupational Therapist, as elements that have enabled her to flourish. Rose shared with us two magnificent songs, of great depth, power and beauty. We are delighted to have Rose as a true Ambassador for ASCA and adult survivors.

John Teer, ASCA Chair spoke of his support for ASCA over the last four years, with two years as Chair, and the reasons he feels ASCA is so worthy of support.

We are most grateful for all those who attended the night to lend their support, as well as to others who have supported ASCA so actively over the last year, especially in the lead-up to Blue Knot Day 2012.



Julie McCrossin, MC, interviews Anthony and Chrissie Foster, ASCA Ambassadors

UNTANGLE THE KNOT PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION WIN A \$2000 PRIZE

The closing date for the current **Untangle the Knot Competition** has been extended to February 28. The theme is 'hope and optimism' building on ASCA's research around possibilities for recovery.

All images must include a 'blue knot'* which can be displayed with as much artistic device as the entrant chooses within the terms and conditions of the competition.

Find out how to enter at www.asca.org.au and click on Blue Knot Day – untangle the knot photo competition – extended

Blue Knot Day 2012

Survivors keep Swimming Upstream to recovery



A community art installation and storytelling presentation at the Orchard Gallery @ South Sydney Uniting Church

SWIMMING UPSTREAM is a multi-media visual art and storytelling project conceived by Alana Valentine and created by a dedicated team of community weavers and narrators. Supported by ASCA. Heather Robinson, chair of the SSUC, and Reverend Andrew Collis have been presenting a memorial service for adult survivors of child abuse for the last three years. SWIMMING UPSTREAM is the next stage of their commitment to this important community health issue.

The exhibition is made up of thousands of small ribbons that have been hand woven into origami fish throughout this year by survivors, community members and supporters. The care and dedication taken over each fish is a way of symbolically honouring the story and experience of every child who has suffered childhood trauma. The notion of the fish swimming upstream is that adults who are recovering from trauma will always, metaphorically, be swimming against the current and therefore struggling against powerful forces pushing them the other way, but, nevertheless, will and can make it upstream; that is, recover from their ordeal.

As part of this project a storytelling presentation was made on Saturday November 3. Written by Alana Valentine, the

script was structured so that four community narrators read sections of poetry, jingles and songs woven through the narrative. Between these sections were verbatim stories in the real words of survivors of childhood trauma, which were read by a procession of readers from the audience. It was an incredibly daring and wonderfully affirming experience to watch people come up from the audience to read the stories of survivors - to cry a little, to find their voice, to feel the support of the audience, to become bolder, to participate in their own healing, and to gain courage and self-esteem in collective truth-telling.

After the presentation, one reader said, 'When people from the audience were invited to read I went up to take a turn, not knowing what I would be confronted with, but then so many aspects of the story on the page resonated with my own story. It was amazing to read someone else's story aloud that was both not mine and so much mine at the same time.' At the end of the presentation, one brave woman addressed the audience saying, 'I can't tell you how important it was for me to sit there and hear my story read... and just be believed.' The power of her confession in that moment will resonate with the assembled audience for a very long time. Another audience member said, 'I wanted to

"When you walk into the foyer of the Orchard Gallery at the South Sydney Uniting Church there are hundreds of small blue origami fish, swimming, as if in mid-air above you."

come today to bear witness. I believe that if, at ASCA, we want people to listen, then we first have to be listeners. I came today as an act of solidarity for those who need their truth to be listened to.'

The Art Installation is on display till December 20th. Should you wish to see this moving and poignant installation please phone Heather Robinson on 0400 318 719.



Blue Knot Day 2012

Welcome to On Recovery Road – Creativity Exhibition



"If someone can sit in the shade of a tree today, it's because someone planted a seed a long time ago"

The following words were spoken by Asti Berner who organised the exhibition, "On Recovery Road" which showcased works produced by adult survivors of child abuse. Asti saw the exhibition as a celebration as well as a fundraiser for ASCA, and we would like to thank her most sincerely for her commitment, effort and achievements in putting together an amazing exhibition.

"Recovery Road is a very long, tiring and painful road to travel. It is easy to get caught up in our destination so that we don't notice how far we have already come. This exhibition is celebrating what we have gained during our journey and to remind us to appreciate the journey itself. Especially the kindness of the people we have met and of those who we have still to meet along the way."

Asti Berner

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 eight 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.

Now with
extended
hours!



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

Guidelines Go Global

The Launch of ASCA's *Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery*, officiated by Hon Mark Butler MP, has been welcomed by survivors, organisations and practitioners alike.



"What the ASCA team has accomplished in Australia is beyond the wildest dreams of most national and international groups. Government endorsement and great media coverage will have an international impact."

Thomas Carlton, President International Society for Study of Trauma and Dissociation.

"Just wanted to congratulate you on the excellent work you and ASCA have done with these Guidelines!"

Anonymous

"Heartiest congratulations to you, what an achievement!"

Adah Sachs, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, Consultant Psychotherapist; Forensic Clinical Lead, Clinic for Dissociative Studies, London.

As we go to press, well over 2000 individuals and organisations have downloaded the Guidelines from www.asca.org.au/guidelines

Not only has their release been welcomed in mainstream media but also in health professional media to positive response.

Distribution is ongoing as further disciplines, peak bodies and umbrella organisations are apprised of the Guidelines' release. We would particularly like to acknowledge, Prof Warwick Middleton for his extraordinary support in the distribution of the Guidelines through national and international networks, both during the feedback and endorsement process, as well as after their launch by the Minister for Mental Health, Hon Mark Butler MP.



Cathy Kezelman, Pam Stavropoulos & Warwick Middleton

Guidelines Media

news.com.au | October 29 | *Child abuse nearly all in the family, research shows*

TWO out of three child abuse survivors who contacted a helpline were harmed by a member of their immediate family, with just 2 per cent hurt by a stranger, research shows.

A further one in four victims was harmed by a member of their extended family, one in eight by a family friend and one in 10 by a member of a religious group.

Teachers were responsible for 5 per cent of child abuse, the research found. It is estimated between four and five million Australian adults are survivors of childhood trauma.

Support group Adults Surviving Child Abuse has released the research to coincide with Blue Knot Day today, an annual event uniting Australians in support of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

Three quarters of the 2800 people who called the ASCA helpline said the child abuse they had suffered had affected their mental health.

Sixteen per cent said it had left them grappling with suicide and one in 10 had had problems with alcohol and 9 per cent with drugs.

ASCA president Dr Cathy Kezelman said supporting adult survivors of child abuse had been largely ignored by Australian society.

The research highlighted there were harsh impacts for survivors of childhood trauma. The finding that only 2 per cent of child abuse related to strangers, underlined misconceptions about the problem.

The research shows children had more to fear from their own family members, friends and relatives than from strangers.

"If anything, this research reinforces the need to break the taboo surrounding childhood abuse, and raise awareness for everyone in the community about child protection and the needs of adult survivors," Dr Kezelman said.

"By creating open and accepting communities, we can bring hope and optimism to those affected and assist survivors to reach out for the help they need to work through the impacts of their abuse and reclaim their lives."

Mental Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler today will launch new guidelines for responding to complex trauma associated with child abuse victims.

For help, call ASCA's support line on 1300 657 380 or visit the website asca.org.au.



National Times | 13 November | *Victims' welfare key in abuse inquiry*

The Royal Commission on institutional responses to the sexual abuse of children in religious, government and non-government organisations offers a unique opportunity for Australia to establish robust child protection and victim support systems.

Schools, churches and other such organisations and institutions, and those who work in them, are in a position of responsibility and

accountability for the children entrusted into their care. Any abuse of their power and authority, can cause fear, horror and helplessness.

When that abuse is repeated, trust is further betrayed. When organisations and institutions ignore, minimise and dismiss survivors' experiences, the impacts can be further compounded.

Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA) welcomes the royal commission. It brings an opportunity to fully, comprehensively and transparently investigate all allegations of child sexual assault, past and present, and the processes, practices, policies, laws and systems that conspire to perpetuate the actual and potential sexual assault of Australian children.

While Australia will be looking to the commission to provide recommendations that prioritise the safety and protection of our children, the commission must also make recommendations regarding apologies, redress, reparation, and professional support for victims.

In child sexual assault the traumatic acts are premeditated, often repeated and can occur over a long period of time. The impacts are cumulative and destructive. But with the right support, personal and professional, there is cause for hope and optimism – recovery is possible.

The damaging experiences on the brain can be repaired, and survivors benefit from ongoing therapy and counselling from those with expertise in this field. The commission has a responsibility to recommend the right professional support for survivors and the resources to enable it.

In addition, it is imperative that the commission and its officers understand the effects of trauma on victims and their particular vulnerabilities and sensitivities. This includes survivors' susceptibility to repeated stressors, including subsequent betrayals, minimisation of their experiences, drawn out negotiations for compensation and other forms of re-traumatisation.

In announcing research from callers to the 1300 support line, ASCA confirmed that for the vast majority of children who have been abused, the perpetrator was someone they knew.

Of those who spoke about their perpetrators, the research shows the majority, 62 per cent, were harmed by their immediate family and 23 per cent by extended family. Only 2 per cent were abused by strangers. Other perpetrators include family friends (12 per cent), religious group (9 per cent) and teachers (5 per cent).

When a child is sexually abused they take on an inappropriate sense of shame and self-blame, and these feelings often continue into adult life. Even though survivors may want to talk about their feelings, their own shame, as well as fear of how others will respond, can stop them from doing so.

Overcoming the shame of child sexual assault and speaking out takes courage and fortitude. It means facing the betrayal of those who perpetrated the abuse and those who were complicit in protecting them.

Those conducting this commission of inquiry need to be informed about trauma to minimise the potential for re-traumatisation.

That said, the vast majority of survivors and survivor organisations welcome the royal commission as an opportunity to be heard, to see justice done and to influence real change.

Offering a choice to provide public or private testimony would enable more survivors to break the secrecy and silence of child sexual assault, to feel empowered and understood. Being listened to and being believed can be an important step in the recovery process. Genuine and heart-felt apologies, as well as a process of redress, can also go some way towards starting that process.

Let's seize the opportunity to work together to achieve that end.

theaustralian.com.au | November 13 | *Prime Minister Julia Gillard has called a royal commission into child sexual abuse justice*

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has called a royal commission into child sexual abuse, promising to investigate not just those who committed evil acts but also those who turned a blind eye.

Ms Gillard said the inquiry would cover all religious organisations, schools, government bodies and non-profit groups such as Scouts and sports clubs.

It would also examine the response of institutions, children's services, police and the legal system.

"Child sexual abuse is a vile thing, it's an evil thing," the PM said.

"It's done by evil people, but what we've seen too, I think, in recent revelations, it's not just the evil of the people who do it. There has been a systemic failure to respond to it and to better protect children.

"We need to learn the lessons about how institutions can best respond when there are allegations of sexual abuse of children."

Ms Gillard said the inquiry could last years, and she would take a couple of weeks to consult child abuse survivors, churches and states about the terms of reference.

There could be one or more commissioners to ensure there was expertise in legal and child protection issues.

She said the royal commission should be set up by the end of the year and start work in the new year.

Ms Gillard said it was not aimed at any church. But before her announcement she spoke to Australia's most senior Catholic, Cardinal George Pell.

Cardinal Pell last night said he supported the royal commission as the public remained unconvinced the Catholic Church had dealt adequately with sexual abuse, in part due to one-sided media coverage.

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ASCA in the News

The Daily Telegraph | November 21 | *Criticism for abuse inquiry deadline*

Victims groups yesterday condemned the government's Monday deadline for submissions that will shape the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse.

The government was accused of rushing the establishment of the commission after providing just seven days for feedback regarding the terms of reference.

"We are quite concerned, it is such a short time frame, obviously it is very critical to get

the terms of reference right," Adults Surviving Child Abuse president Dr Cathy Kazelman said.

"It is important to talk to all the relevant stake holders and take the time to consider this as thoroughly as possible."

The government is speaking with many child protection advocates and abuse survivor groups. Institutions and victims will be asked once the terms of reference are set to provide submissions relevant to the commission, with

the first call only addressing the scope of the inquiry.

Hetty Johnston from Bravehearts said the submission timeline was adequate.

"They are just submissions for the terms of reference, not for the inquiry," she said.

"We are ready to roll."

Yahoo.com | November 24 | *Helplines swamped by abuse victims*

Support groups say they have been overwhelmed with phone calls from sexual assault victims since a royal commission into institutional abuse was announced more than a week ago.

The volume is such that some calls are going unanswered, and now the Federal Government is giving \$200,000 to three groups to help them keep up with demand.

Bravehearts' executive director Hetty Johnston says the number of calls is up 82 per cent since the royal commission was announced last week. "We are struggling to keep up, definitely," she said. "We just can't keep up, it's as simple as that - at some point we're going to burn out. It's impossible to sustain."

She says often the line is busy or there is no one to answer, and victims have to leave a message. "We had a call the other day from a child - we don't know, maybe eight, nine, 10, like that - private number, couldn't trace it, she didn't leave her number.

"And that was an after-hours call. We need to be able to answer these phones." Ms Johnson says the callers are both people reporting fresh abuse and people like teachers or nurses reporting cases they have come across.

The Federal Government has given Bravehearts a one-off grant of \$75,000 to help it cope with the increased demand.

That will pay for three extra people on the phones for the next three months. "It's not going to be enough. It'll alleviate it in the short term, but it's still not going to be enough," Ms Johnson said.

Adults Surviving Child Abuse and the Care Leavers Australia Network are two other support groups that have won grants from the Government.

Adults Surviving Child Abuse president Cathy Kezelman says her organisation has also been swamped with calls. "Initially it was a 400 per cent increase, with the initial announcement," she said. "That's settled down a bit now."

Dr Kezelman says at the moment they can only pay for staff to take calls four hours a day. "Some of them will be going unanswered - they're obviously returned as soon as we can," she said. "We don't have someone there, certainly not 24/7, not even seven days a week at this point. But we're working with Government to increase capacity as rapidly as we can."

Ms Johnston is not expecting demand to die down any time soon.

"This is only going to get worse as the royal commission goes forward," she said. "When I say worse, it's actually better, because it's wonderful that we're breaking the silence. And it's wonderful that people are feeling so inspired by this whole process that they would finally tell somebody."

One of those who called Bravehearts since hearing about the royal commission is Richard Parker, who was sexually abused by a teacher in regional New South Wales in the 1970s.

It took him decades to report it to the police, but the teacher was jailed two years ago. "[I called Bravehearts] not to complain, but to assist them, and say, 'look I'm here, this happened to me, this is what I can offer you, and offer the Commission for that matter' - a voice of experience, unfortunately, but for the betterment of others," he said.

Mr Parker says sexual assault victims like him need more support. "The thing we can do as a society is to believe, regardless of the age of the person reporting it, is to believe what they say, because that does a lot for the healing process," he said.

Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin was not available for an interview, but a spokeswoman says the Government is considering ongoing support needs.

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"I believe the air should be cleared and the truth uncovered. We shall co-operate fully with the royal commission," he said.

The PM also spoke to Premier Ted Baillieu and NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell, who both have state inquiries. Mr Baillieu said Victoria would co-operate and work "to appropriately bring together the work of these two inquiries".

Anthony and Christine Foster, ambassadors of Adults Surviving Child Abuse, were "elated".

The couple's daughters, Emma and Katie, were raped by a Melbourne priest when in primary school.

Early in 2008, Emma died of a medication overdose at the age of 26. Katie became a binge drinker as a result of abuse and was hit by a drunk driver in 1999. She was left disabled, needing 24-hour care.

"The royal commission will be able to ensure all appropriate documentation is retrieved and hopefully there will be justice for victims and the establishment of a system so child sex abuse becomes a thing of the past," Mr Foster said.

Ms Gillard said she asked Governor-General Quentin Bryce to establish a royal commission because a national approach was needed, as there had been too many cover-ups and allegations of abusers being moved beyond state borders.

"Too many children have suffered child abuse and they have also seen other adults let them down. They've not only had their trust betrayed by the abuser but other adults who could have acted to assist them and failed to do so.

"There have been too many revelations of adults who have averted their eyes from this evil."

The PM said the royal commission should not delay police investigations or prosecutions.

Before the PM's announcement Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said the Coalition would support a royal commission if it were wide-ranging.



ASCA welcomes a new Ambassador – Rose Parker

ASCA is delighted to welcome Rose Parker to our team of dedicated Ambassadors. Rose is an Occupational Therapist who has worked in private practice for over 25 years, in the area of chronic pain management. She is a leader in the use of modalities that combine physical and psychological approaches to recovery. Following is an extract of Rose's story about her journey of recovery from childhood abuse.

I have chosen to be a part of ASCA because I know that recovery is possible. I know this because I have done it. Having said that, I also accept that it's an ongoing process. However, I feel immensely proud of the long hard journey I have travelled and very grateful for the people who have helped me become the woman I am today.

At the age of three or four I was taken into institutional care at a children's home called Wanslea in Cottesloe, Western Australia. After six months I was moved to Mofflin Methodist Children's Home in Victoria Park. I remember being told I was going somewhere special. One day, dressed in my good dress, my white lacy socks and my shiny black shoes, I was put in the back of a taxi with my small suitcase. I did not know where I was going. No one accompanied me. I laid down on the back seat of the taxi and watched the journey through the window upside down. I saw clouds and trees and street signs spin slowly and silently as the witnesses to my solitary journey.

I remember the thick hedge of pine trees filled the window frame as the car accelerated up a hill and then came to a stop. The taxi man came around to open my door. I climbed out and reached for his hand. I can still see his face as he clumsily took the little hand in his big fleshy paw. He walked me up a set of concrete steps where Matron greeted me. I made her stand with me and wave the taxi man goodbye.

My mother had three children in four years, developed severe post-natal depression and descended into psychosis that was eventually diagnosed as schizophrenia. She was institutionalised, heavily medicated and given electro-shock therapy for more than 20 years. My father, a chronic alcoholic, had served in the Second World War. We were his third attempt at a family.

Life as a four year old in an orphanage was lonely. All the basics were provided, but there was no warmth or affection. On weekends we were sent to one of three families that each took turns in having us. Good for them; confusing for us. Everyone had different rules and expectations. I learnt to be a chameleon and adapt to any situation to fit in and be loved.

I was subjected to sexual abuse by one of the families over three years. One of the other families was related to the abuser and he would therefore have access to us on their weekends as well. I have countless vivid memories of these events. I never told anyone. It occurred in two houses. I still cannot drive down these streets today.

I realise now I said nothing because I had learnt to say nothing. "Shut up, put up, you've got to take the good with the bad."

School holidays were spent with my extended family. Happy memories of home cooked meals, dogs and baby kangaroos in the yard, country football matches, CWA afternoon teas and my mother playing the piano, saxophone and singing, at times lucid but always a little strange and ultimately not available. The trips back to the orphanage after these blissfully normal holidays were unbearable. There was never any explanation about why I was being sent back, so I created my own reasons around not being wanted or loveable; that I wasn't good enough and that I was different to other kids. The sexual abuse reinforced all of these feelings.

When I was 10, we were made wards of the state. We were told to choose between the three families with whom we spent weekends. My sister and I looked at each other and without a word we selected the only family we could go to. We never told anyone our reasons. After three years we moved to another foster family due to ailing health of one of the foster parents, and an amazing meeting of chance.

The next family was crazy, fun and loud with three children of their own. We became our very own Brady Bunch. Carol, the mum was actually the half sister we never knew existed - our father's daughter from his first marriage, who came searching for us after a chance encounter with our father in a public bar, having not seen him for 20 years. She did not stop until she found us and just after my thirteenth birthday they bought two extra single beds, a Holden Kingswood station wagon, and moved us in. I tell Carol she saved my life. She tells me I blessed hers.

To read the rest of Rose's story, visit the ASCA website.



ASCA Workshops

Workshops for Health Professionals

One Day Workshop for Health Professionals – working with adult survivors of complex trauma

ASCA's one day workshop for health professionals is grounded in a substantive research base, which identifies and outlines effective responses to complex trauma. The workshop is drawn from ASCA's Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery www.asca.org.au/guidelines

This workshop covers:

- Understanding complex trauma - prevalence and impacts
- Neurobiology of attachment
- Supportive relationships
- Self-development and self-care
- Coping strategies - adaptive/risk factors
- Reflective practice and vicarious traumatisation
- Practice guidelines for working with adult survivors of complex trauma
- The workshop has been designed for health professionals including doctors, social workers, psychologists, mental health nurses, counsellors/therapists, psychiatrists and other health care professionals

Full-day workshop: 9.00am-5.00pm.

Cost: \$250 or student concession \$190

Professional development endorsement:

ACMHN- 7 ACMHN CPE Points

Book now online: www.asca.org.au/workshops

For more information about up-coming workshops, please call **02 8920 3611** or email events@asca.org.au

ASCA In-house workshops

ASCA workshops are now available in-house on request for organisations seeking trauma-informed training and/or professional development for working with adult survivors of childhood trauma.

Workshops cover topics such as:

- Principles of trauma informed practice
- Complex trauma vs. single incident trauma
- Practice guidelines for working with adult survivors of complex trauma
- Unresolved trauma (prevalence and impacts)
- Coping strategies - adaptive/risk factors
- Attachment, supportive relationships and self-care
- Neuroplasticity and recovery

ASCA in-house workshops provide many benefits as your team can request the topics which interest you and use the time to focus on issues pertinent to your clients and practice. Workshops of one day, two days and half day duration are available.

For more information about in-house workshops, please call **02 8920 3611** or email events@asca.org.au

Workshops for Survivors

ASCA's survivor workshops provide survivors and those supporting them with a safe space in which to learn about the impacts of childhood trauma, in all its forms, and possibilities for the process of recovery. They discuss ways in which trauma in childhood can impact current or past behaviours, feelings and/or physical and psychological health. They also build on existing strengths to foster a sense of hope and optimism about the recovery process and provide tools for positive change.

All ASCA workshops are grounded in the latest research presented in ASCA's Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery.

www.asca.org.au/guidelines

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

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

register
now

| Date | Location |
|---------------|------------|
| 23 March 2013 | Gold Coast |
| 27 April 2013 | Bendigo |
| 27 April 2013 | Wollongong |
| 18 May 2013 | Newcastle |

Book now online:

www.asca.org.au/workshops

** 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.

Workshops for Community Workers

This whole day training for community workers provides tools to equip workers in their daily interactions with clients who experience unresolved trauma.

This workshop covers:

- Information about trauma - prevalence, impacts and costs
- Complex trauma vs. single incident trauma
- Attachment, supportive relationships, self-care
- Coping strategies - adaptive/risk factors
- Neuroplasticity and recovery
- Principles of trauma-informed practice
- Re-traumatisation and vicarious traumatisation
- Collaboration in care, between and within services and systems
- Need for broad-based change at all levels in systems and services

| Date | Location | Time |
|------------------|------------|-----------|
| 8 February 2013 | Gold Coast | 9am – 5pm |
| 15 February 2013 | Bendigo | 9am – 5pm |
| 22 February 2013 | Wollongong | 9am – 5pm |
| 22 March 2013 | Newcastle | 9am – 5pm |

Book now online:
www.asca.org.au/workshops

register
now