

Breaking free

asca

Adults Surviving Child Abuse

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

A Vision for Child Protection

Child protection must be taken more seriously. The challenges are numerous. First, young and disabled children are targeted for sexual abuse because offenders are unlikely to be prosecuted if victims are too young to cope with "rigorous" cross examination by barristers in the adult adversarial criminal court environment. The conviction rate for child sex offenders is a national disgrace. Because of this, the Family Court is dealing with large numbers of allegations of father-child abuse although it is not equipped to investigate them.

Numerous authorities, including judges, have recommended massive reforms to take children out of the adversarial system but Attorneys General and politicians have resisted change. One said, "Attorneys General only listen to lawyers who don't think like normal parents. They like the system as it is because they can get clients off... irrespective of whether they are guilty". Convicted sex offenders told me that their lawyers bragged about how easy it was to trick, frighten and discredit child witnesses.

Second, there must be a comprehensive and explicit child protection curriculum in all schools catering for years K-12. NSW and New Zealand were the first to implement this and SA has followed on but other Australian states have been lax.

Third, there has to be community and professional education, especially in human services and law courses, on all aspects of child abuse and its effects on victims. Ignorant parents and professionals can exacerbate the problems for victims by ignoring disclosures and reprimanding them.

Fourth, there has to be a greater emphasis on help for those who recognise that they are at risk of abusing children. Kiwanis (SA) wanted to have big "Stop child abuse now" posters on the back of buses giving a phone number for seeking help. Families SA refused to cooperate saying they could not handle more reports of abuse.

When it signed the UN Convention, our governments agreed to provide all of the above. So why have they been neglected?

Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs | ASCA Patron

Read more about Freda on page 3



BLUEKNOTDAY
29 OCTOBER 2012

COUNTDOWN

IT'S TIME TO GET INVOLVED

Entries for **UNTANGLE THE KNOT** photo competition closing soon – **\$2000 prize**... more inside.

See pages 4 and 5 for what's on and how to get involved.

From the Editor

The ASCA community is abuzz with preparations for Blue Knot Day and naturally, you will find that reflected in this issue of **Breaking Free**. We have dedicated a double page spread (pages 4-5) featuring all the activities registered so far and more ideas on how you can participate.

This month has seen broad media coverage around the issue of clergy abuse, including an apology from the Catholic Church in Victoria to victims of child sexual assault. As submissions to the parliamentary inquiry close ASCA continues to support the call for a Royal Commission into abuse in religious, state-based and other systems. Read more about this apology along with a Timeout article, written for Blue Knot Day 2012 "Breaking the taboo that surrounds child abuse" on page 6.

We are delighted to include a story about one of our passionate supporters, Anna Lindsay, on page 7.



Anna ran a 42.2km marathon to raise money and awareness for ASCA. Woolworths matched her fundraising dollar for dollar. Anna is a wonderful advocate, her efforts express ASCA's mission, which appears on the same page.

Our thanks also to Professor Freda Briggs, ASCA patron, whose vision for child protection is our cover story, and to Bryan for his moving poem on page 3.

Kath O'Sullivan | Editor



Taking care of business

Excitement is growing as we approach **Blue Knot Day**. The launch this year, co-ordinated by Cathy Kezelman, ASCA President, is at Parliament House, Canberra on October 29 reflecting the importance of government support in better meeting the needs of survivors nationally. This year in addition to growing media coverage around **Blue Knot Day** we have established a **blog** and embarked on a social media campaign. We encourage everyone to Like our **facebook** page and follow us on **twitter**.

You can also go online at www.asca.org.au/blueknotday and buy a Blue Knot friendship bracelet or blue knot pin, make a donation, enter our **Untangle the Knot photo competition**, or **hold/join an activity** to celebrate the day and/or fundraise for ASCA. My thanks to the team: Len, Jo and Prenessa, who are all helping with organising this important awareness day.

August and September have been big months for rolling out our workshops for health professionals: *Working with Adults Surviving Child Abuse* and survivors: *Creating New Possibilities*. Nine workshops reaching more than 150 attendees have been held around Australia including several cities across the Northern Territory, as well as Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. Many thanks to our Events Co-ordinator Prenessa and our Facilitators for their outstanding effort and professionalism. A further six workshops are scheduled for October and November. For more info see the back page or visit www.asca.org.au/workshops.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our 1300 Counsellors who take an amazing range of calls each week. Some come from people disclosing for the first time; other callers need information, support, advice or referral. ASCA has a referral database of practitioners and agencies with experience and expertise in supporting those who have experienced childhood trauma. The counsellors also provide information and guidance to concerned friends, partners and family members who are supporting a survivor and/or community workers and health professionals. For more information on our 1300 line see the 'What We Do' section of our website and click on the 1300 Professional Support Line link.

Margaret Price | Chief Operating Officer

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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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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 (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/ascaorg

 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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Ten little toes

Ten little fingers came out of the darkness to life.

Ten little toes followed in sequence.

That's the first breath I take. Soft voices I hear, that of soft white wings, perhaps angels.

Upside down I hear a cry, perhaps my own. The essence of warm breath. What were once just tears have left life within fear.

273 days. 6480 hours. Neglected. 3888,800 minutes. Unwanted. 23,328,000 seconds it took for my parents to reject, leave, dump, abandon me to a life under anaesthetised shear hell.

Universe of abandonments, elements here on earth, mysterious childhood memories, ghosts standing within the walls within the mind.

Over the next whole 16 years, I wished and cursed every day that I'd die. Was in my cry for my birth, my entry, leashed out evil nuns residency hovering in death, perhaps I did. In care, out of home, cruel carer left me in pain, little known then I was just fodder for prey. Although I was taught to think, pray. Catholic way!

To get away from them I would run as fast my little legs could carry me away. Then trip, fall, grabbed by the back of my head and pushed through a concrete corridor and green mirrored tiled walls.

Blood. I breathe. There is no air. As I fall off my chair, there is a gagging sound from my airway passage: the essence of a young life, a vulnerable child being stripped and abused. Red, purple, raw skin, scaled from you in your dawns of raining within my minds infancy.

Young child suddenly vanishes to within rain. Rain in the haze, within the mist, fog within rain, mist within tears. Slight haze being shy, has little to do with being all the long living within fear, and dealing with unwanted invasions of our soul's journey to a healthy adult life. This unwanted creeps back to haunt us within the night's realm.

Survivors' shadows. Pain and suffering. Anxiety, nervousness, doubts and live my life alone and with insecurity; the knowledge perhaps you're



never good enough. Without the feeling of ever having or enjoying love. Here and now we lay beneath.

Recalling of memories that are endless and relentless and as real to my subconscious as years ago. Subconsciously dying and fear that was belted and bullied into me still resembles life as an infant, vulnerable child just wanting someone to take my hand and gently guide me through the road of unhappiness; just to lead me away from all this forced upon us as children in care.

Many years have passed me by now, and I have although reluctantly, always been out on the road learning my journey. I change cities and makeshift life, however the one I most want always has eluded me. To escape these stories of ghosts in the orphanage hallways and passages that follow me, haunt me, invade me - but they never go away. And never allow me to find kindness and a friend that could one day be a special part of me.

My childhood passed away one day, perhaps on the way to church.

Bryan



Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs AO

Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs AO left school at the age of 15. At 20, she moved to London to become a child protection specialist with London's Metropolitan Police. She went on to gain experience as a social worker, then teacher in disadvantaged areas. It was during this period she recognised the importance of teachers in identifying and reporting child abuse, and supporting victims and their non-offending parents. She continued to study and when she became a lecturer, she introduced the first courses on child protection in the English-speaking world. (Other academics thought she was crazy... child abuse "didn't happen in Australia")

Freda was recruited in 1976 to establish new early childhood courses in Victoria and went on to become Dean at what is now the University of

South Australia. She undertook seminal research into child sex abuse with male victims and offenders, introduced child protection curricula for children, and advised police, governments and organisations involved with children around the world.

Freda was the first recipient of the Australian Humanitarian of the Year Award (Education), the second Senior Australian of the Year (2000), received the Order of Australia (2005) and an Honorary Doctorate in Letters from a UK university (2009). She received an ANZAC award for research of value to both Australia and New Zealand and was the first civilian to receive an award from New Zealand police whom she assisted for 21 years. Freda continues to lecture at the University of South Australia and has published 20 books.

Blue Knot Day Activities – 29 Oct



BLUEKNOTDAY
29 OCTOBER 2012

On Blue Knot Day, ASCA asks all Australians to unite in support of the estimated 4-5 million Australian adults who have experienced some form of childhood trauma. Blue Knot Day will be celebrated on Monday October 29, 2012 and activities will be held in the week from October 29 to November 4.

WHAT'S ON

BLUE KNOT DAY Launch 2012

Hosted and supported by Senator Matt Thistlethwaite and Senator Catryna Bilyk, Blue Knot Day will be launched at Parliament House in Canberra on Monday 29 October.

ASCA invites you to join parliamentarians and advisors at a morning tea briefing entitled:

Working together to change Australian lives: heralding a new era in trauma recovery.

Speakers: John Teer, ASCA Chairperson & Dr Cathy Kezelman, ASCA President

Parliament House Canberra – Room No: 1S2, 12.30pm - 1.30pm – (access via Senate entrance)

The event will bring together government representatives, survivors and their supporters, community members and representatives from ASCA and other organisations.

An online version of this invitation is available at www.asca.org.au/blueknotday

DONATE to our **Blue Knot Day** appeal www.givenow.com.au/blueknotday

STOP PRESS!

The Hon Mark Butler has confirmed he will be launching *ASCA's Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery* at this event.

ASCA needs your support to continue its work

GIVE GENEROUSLY this BLUE KNOT DAY

Scheduled Events – NSW

3 Nov – 20 Dec	Swimming Upstream Visual Art Installation	South Sydney Uniting Church Waterloo NSW
4 November	Church Service	South Sydney Uniting Church Waterloo NSW
4 November 11.30am	Service	Hope Street Compassion The Old Fire Station, 113 Mitchell Street Glebe NSW 2037
18 November 7.00am & 9.00am	Church Service	St Marks Anglican Church West Street Casino NSW 2470
12 November 6.30pm	Tears & Hope A Service of Healing for Survivors of Abuse. Open to all who have been affected by abuse in any context. Click here for pdf flyer.	St John's Anglican Church 120 Darlinghurst Road Darlinghurst NSW 2010 For more details please contact St John's Church Office 9360 684

Scheduled Events – QLD

26-30 October	On Recovery Road http://www.everydayhero.com.au/astiberners_hope	Discount Art Warehouse 34 Arthur Street Fortitude Valley Brisbane QLD
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Scheduled Events – WA

3 November 2.00pm	Meeting for Worship	Religious Society of Friends 35 Clifton Crescent Mount Lawley WA 6050
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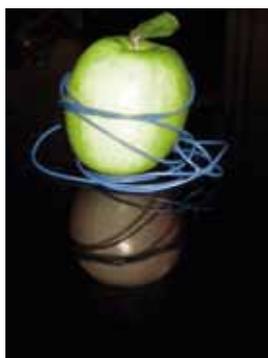
See the [ASCA website](http://www.asca.org.au) for further details: www.asca.org.au/blueknotday and click on *Activities By State*

Blue Knot Day Activities – 29 Oct

LAST CALL FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Entries for ASCA's third annual **Untangle the Knot Photo Competition** close on October 5, so you only have a few days left to submit photos. This year's concept, 'hope and optimism', reflects the theme for Blue Knot Day and highlights ASCA's research which establishes possibilities for recovery for adult survivors of childhood trauma.

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. A generous prize to the value of \$2000 will be awarded to the winner.



Previous competition entries

Finalists' entries will be displayed via a virtual gallery using **Flickr**. Everyone will have an opportunity to vote online for their favourite finalist and the final decision will be made by the judges, Mark Tedeschi and Alan Davies by October 11.

For more information and to view the competition terms and conditions visit <http://www.asca.org.au/untangletheknot>

GET INVOLVED

We thank those communities who supported **Forget Me Knot Day** in prior years. We hope that your community as well as others will support **Blue Knot Day 2012**. On Blue Knot Day communities around Australia unite in support of adults traumatised as children.

Here are just some of the ways you can participate.

Hold a service: If you belong to a faith-based community ask your minister/religious leader to hold a Blue Knot Day service. You can order blue knot friendship bracelets and/or blue knot pins to wear and buy ribbon to create blue knots to symbolically untangle during a service in your church/synagogue or mosque.

Hold or attend an event in which you may choose to fundraise:

- a morning or afternoon tea, lunch or barbeque
- a picnic get-together in the park
- an open garden or garage sale

Start an Everyday Hero page: to create your own fundraising event for Blue Knot Day; register your event at <http://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/blueknotday2012>

However you choose to celebrate Blue Knot Day, you can register your event or join a scheduled event, download a Blue Knot Day poster with space to promote your activity, and/or order Blue Knot pins or friendship bracelets from the ASCA website www.asca.org.au/blueknotday

Email events@asca.org.au or call 02 8920 3611 for more information.

Visit the Blue Knot Day blog  www.blueknotday.wordpress.com

Follow Blue Knot Day on Facebook and Twitter



www.facebook.com/blueknotday



www.twitter.com/blueknotday



www.flickr.com/photos/blueknotday

RAISING AWARENESS TACKLING STIGMA FOSTERING HOPE PROMOTING RECOVERY



ASCA in the News

AAP | August 21 | Vic Catholic Church sorry for sex abuse

Victoria's most senior Catholics have apologised for the sexual abuse of children under the church's care and say they'll continue to take decisive action to protect children. In a letter to parishioners the church says it is deeply sorry for the suffering and trauma endured by children and the betrayal of trust. The letter, which is a statement on the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into child abuse, acknowledges abuse and suffering is a matter of continuing shame for Catholics. It also says the church will co-operate with a Victorian parliamentary inquiry into child sex abuse in religious and other organisations. Lobby group **Adults Surviving Child Abuse** has welcomed the apology but says it needs to be coupled with action.



Timeout | August 17 | Breaking the taboo of child abuse



Guilt and shame; the two loneliest emotions and a waste of a life. The weight of them drive people into addiction, crime, homelessness, self harm and suicide. The seed of them is so frequently child abuse.

Adults Surviving Child Abuse supports those who, as children, have been affected by sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence, community violence, parents under the influence of substances and more. Childhood trauma is a societal problem that crosses over into many professions as those children grow up: the police force, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, social services, mental health and all manner of care programs.. It's a scourge that affects millions of lives in Australia, and it doesn't discriminate against gender, postcode or socioeconomic background.

Then why is something this prevalent so taboo? Avoidance of the subject harms those affected the most – and lets the perpetrators off the hook. (Journalists) trying to get child abuse stories (published), run into brick walls. So has ASCA's Dr Cathy Kezelman, although with the return of Blue Knot Day this October 29 to raise public awareness, she remains hopeful.

"We've had some success infiltrating the media, but I've had the same experience as (journalists)," Cathy, a former GP, says, "both personally in publishing my own story [*Innocence Revisited*] and also organisationally in terms of getting non-sensationalist coverage with media and securing corporate sponsorship with companies that want to align with a good cause... It's very frustrating but also surprising, given the prevalence of abuse. One in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused in Australia. A rape in adulthood would be horrific, but imagine being sexually molested as a child on a weekly basis and the trauma that causes to the developing brain. We're talking about compounded cumulative trauma."

While Kezelman concedes that organised religion has a poor history of protecting children, she believes the problem of brushing abuse under the carpet is wider spread. "For most people, family tends to be quite sacrosanct, and abuse doesn't fit into their perceptions of family life. Children who are abused take on a very acute sense of shame and self-blame. That's perpetuated by both the perpetrators and a society that doesn't want to hear, or by a family that wants to keep up appearances. So a lot of people never disclose their abuse."

The reasons for silence on the part of the victim, even upon reaching adulthood, can be manifold. There's the fear of having your experience dismissed or not believed. The fear of negatively impacting new relationships and involving people ill-equipped to understand. And child abuse is a subject that implicates more people than just the perpetrator. Speaking out points the finger, malevolently or not, at family members and friends; those who could have potentially stepped in. Sharing the load risks rocking the boat.

ASCA has become a model that's leading the way for responding to trauma both nationally and internationally. "It's a small organisation trying to do a great deal," says Kezelman. "We run a support line which connects people with a trained therapist. We run educational workshops for survivors which help them connect what happened to them then with how they're responding in the present, and gives them tools for positive change. Our approach moves away from the usual model of asking "What's wrong with you?," to acknowledging people's coping strategies – that many people who have experienced traumatic things would have had certain responses."

"Another major thing ASCA does is advocacy," says Kezelman, "in trying to change Federal Government policy around complex trauma. We've just finished a substantial set of practice guidelines for practitioners and organisations. They're not signed off by the Government yet, but they're endorsed by substantial national and international bodies and practitioners. It's a question of educating doctors that two-thirds of people that present with mental health problems have experienced either sexual or physical abuse in childhood."

ASCA recommends that treatment responses incorporate a variety of approaches. The aim is to avoid the retraumatisation that victims can experience once they find themselves in the system, by an approach built on respect, trust and self-empowerment.

"It's about understanding that person's unique experience and how it continues to affect them in the present, and helping them find ways to recover. There are much more positive messages from neuroscience these days. When I was at university we were told you had a certain number of neurons and then they start dying. Now we know the brain can repair itself and you can change the scripts, so there's a real chance for recovery."

NB: This is an edited version of the original story which can be read in full on ASCA's Blue Knot Day Media page: <http://www.asca.org.au/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=365>

ASCA Activities

Anna Lindsay – An ASCA Everyday Hero

Anna Lindsay is passionate about making a difference to survivors of child abuse. Running the Perth City to Surf 42.2km marathon last month, Anna raised \$860 for ASCA through the Everyday Hero portal. This amount has been doubled to \$1720 by her employer Woolworths' Employee Matching Award Scheme.

Anna did brilliantly, not only as a fundraiser, but also as a first time marathon runner.

"I ran it in 4hrs 19mins – under my goal time of 4.5/5hrs – but also just pleased to have finished it as it was very tough," she said.

"I came eighth out of 18 in the female under 25 years category which I'm pretty stoked about considering it was my first marathon!"

Anna chose ASCA as her charity given its unique role in providing proper support and advocacy for child abuse survivors. "Without organisations like ASCA, many lives would be very different," she said.

"I would like to encourage survivors to use their experience to become amazingly strong people who can advocate and support others. My hopes? The past is what happened, the future is what you make of it. If you can get the right support and then give the right support, then I believe you've made the most of dealing with the impact."



We couldn't agree more. ASCA sends out a huge thank you to Anna and to Woolworths for their generous support.

To become an Everyday Hero like Anna and raise money for ASCA's Blue Knot Day, visit the dedicated portal at: <http://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/blueknotday2012>

ASCA: Who We Are



Over the past 12 months, with some support from government, ASCA has established its leadership in the areas of complex trauma and trauma informed care. The ASCA Board has reviewed the organisation's vision and mission to reflect these advances:

Vision

A world free from the impacts of childhood trauma.

Mission

To advance the health and wellbeing of people and communities affected by childhood trauma, for this and future generations.

Key objectives

To facilitate recovery for adult survivors of childhood trauma, their families and communities through:

- Vision and leadership in advocacy and research to promote fundamental changes in policy, culture and practice in the trauma field;
- Provision of professional support and appropriate services to adult survivors and their supporters;
- Delivery of training to health professionals who directly engage in treatment of adults with the lived experience of **complex trauma***; and
- Promotion and implementation of the principles and practice of Trauma

Informed Care* to services and organisations (and their workers) with which people with unresolved trauma histories come into contact.

* **Complex trauma** includes the interpersonal trauma of childhood caused by child abuse in all its forms – emotional, sexual and physical, neglect, family and community violence, as well as other adverse childhood experiences.

* **Trauma-informed Care** promotes awareness of the possibility of trauma in those presenting to services as well as an understanding of the vulnerabilities and/or triggers of trauma survivors. Trauma informed services focus on safety for both survivors and workers, build on strengths and are empowering and more supportive while minimising the possibility of re-traumatisation.

Values

- Recovery
- Hope/optimism
- Safety
- Respect
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Self-care
- Ethical and professional practice

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 now

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

Date	Location
9 November	Parramatta
16 November	Melbourne

Workshops for Community Workers

This whole day training for community workers provides information and tools to better equip workers in their daily interactions with clients who have experienced trauma, particularly the complex trauma of childhood. Studies show that more than 2/3 of those seeking mental health services have experienced complex trauma.

Date	Location	Time
23 November 2012	Hobart	9am – 5pm
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

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

Book now online:

www.asca.org.au/workshops

Date	Location
10 November	Brisbane
17 November	Melbourne
24 November	Hobart
23 March 2013	Gold Coast
27 April 2013	Bendigo
27 April 2013	Wollongong
18 May 2013	Newcastle

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