



WELCOME TO THE 2009 EDITION OF THE

LAUREL HOUSE NEWSLETTER

The Laurel House Newsletter will be produced and circulated amongst clients, service providers and the community to raise awareness of the services available at Laurel House.

It is also a venue to give advance notice of upcoming groups and projects for survivors. There will also be a number of articles about Sexual Assault, stories from survivors, and links to other services for your information.

During 2010 we are hoping to provide you with an ongoing theme about child sexual abuse and the effects and the impact on the child, family, friends and the community. We will include information about how to best support the child and their family and also offer services to the professionals who come into contact with the victims/survivors.

This edition concentrates on Child Sexual Abuse and how the electronic medias have increased the risks to children and adolescents.

OUTREACH TO RURAL AREAS

EAST COAST (includes Bicheno, St Marys and St Helens) First Monday and Tuesday of the month.

SCOTTSDALE Third Wednesday of the month.

GEORGETOWN Second Friday of the month.

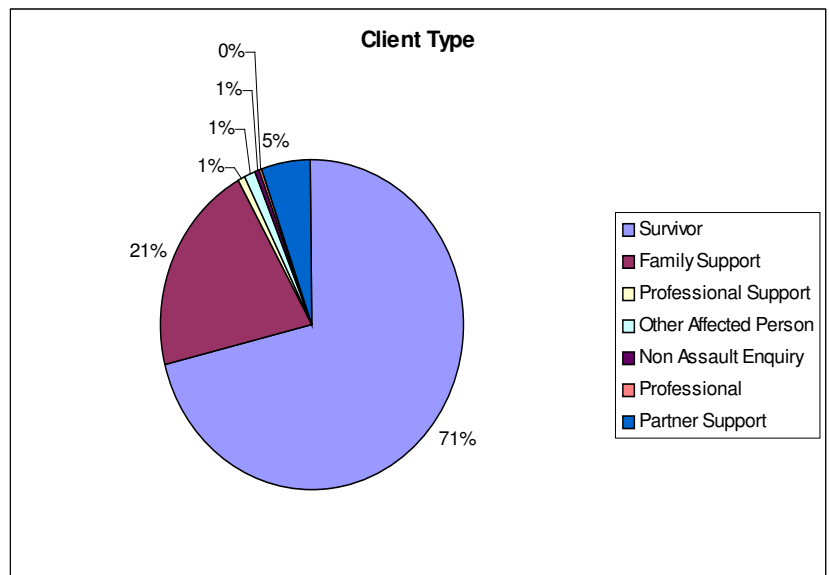
We have recently started outreach to Deloraine, Exeter and Beaconsfield.

If we receive requests from other areas within the 63 telephone regions we will negotiate with Service Providers within these areas.

About Laurel House

Laurel House offers a wide range of services to all members of the community, including victims of immediate rape and sexual assault (both adults, children and their families and support people) adult survivors of child sexual abuse (historical sexual abuse) community education to any group, school and organization and professional training to service providers in other agencies. We also offer a debriefing and supervision to professionals working with victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Our Organization offers services to women, men and children within the 63 telephone region of Tasmania. You will note from the graph opposite that the majority of service users are survivors of sexual assault. This group includes both immediate (crisis) and historical victims/survivors. A full report on the statistics of Laurel House will be in our Annual General report on our website www.laurelhouse.org.au late December.



New Resources

Information on Audio CDs

During this year we received funding from the Community Fund to develop audio CD's and they are now available at Laurel House. The audio CD's are a great communication tool for individuals who have trouble reading. They cover topics in the following:

- Welcome to Laurel House.
- Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.
- Rape and Sexual Assault.
- Adolescents.
- Depression.
- Male Rape.
- Anxiety.
- Support Person.
- Sex Offenders: Tactics and Grooming.
- Male Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Assault.
- Parents and Carers of Children who have been Sexually Assaulted.
- Child Sexual Abuse.

The audio CD's come in both female and male voices.

Information for Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault Booklet

We now have available a booklet for victims/survivors of immediate rape and sexual assault that provides all the information about the forensic/medical, police and legal and crisis counselling. This booklet will be given to the victims/survivors at the time of the crisis call out to the hospital and/or the police.

The information includes the names of the Doctor/Health Professional, Police Officer and the Crisis Worker as well as follow-up options and the services available at Laurel House.

Protecting Our Children

The Reality of Child Sexual Assault

“Imagine a society affected by a scourge which struck down a quarter of its daughters and up to one in eight sons. Imagine also that this plague, while not immediately fatal, lurked in the bodies and minds of these young children for decades, making them up to 16 times more likely to experience its disastrous long term effects. “Finally, imagine the nature of these effects: life-threatening starvation, suicide, persistent nightmares, drug and alcohol abuse and a whole host of intractable psychiatric disorders requiring life-long treatment. What would the society’s response be? The scourge that we are speaking of is child sexual abuse.” (Dr Bill Glasser 1997).

How can society protect our children, is it the responsibility of parents, carers, governments, or is it everyone's?

The shocking statistics:

- One in three girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted in some way before the age of 18 years. (Australian Institute of Criminology 1993).

- A 1994 survey of 453 paedophiles revealed they were collectively responsible for the molestation of over 67, 000 children. That's an average of 148 children per individual paedophile. (Abel 1994).
- A 1999 survey found that only 38 per cent of those who experienced sexual assault reported it, mainly because they were too young, wished to protect the offender, or were worried they would not be believed.
- Girls and boys of all ages are sexually assaulted and victims are sometimes toddlers, young children and even babies. (NSW Child Protection Council 2000).
- 169 child sex offenders who admitted to having committed at least one sexual offence against a child, later disclosed offences concerning 1010 children (748 boys and 262 girls) of which only 393 (38.9 per cent) were reported to have been associated with official convictions. (Smallbone & Wortley 2000).
- In spite of the high non-disclosure rates and the difficulty in substantiating abuse, during 2000/01, a total of 3794 cases of sexual assault against children were substantiated. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2002).
- One child every two hours is the substantiated victim of child sexual assault in Australia. Child abuse and neglect reports are on the rise. For the 2002/03 year, there were 198,000 notifications –one report for every 25 children in Australia and one report of child abuse and neglect every two minutes. Even more alarming is the substantiation figure, which indicates that one child was confirmed by child protection services as having been harmed every 13 minutes-40, 000children for the 12-month period. Of these, 10 per cent were sexual assault. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004). Add to this fact that most cases of child sexual assault are not reported.
- In 2002/03, there were 195, 355 child protection notifications to government authorities. Of these, there were 40, 416 substantiated cases involving 30, 953 children.

The Nature of Child Sexual Assault

- Children rarely lie about or imagine sexual assault. In 98 per cent of cases their statements are found to be true. (Dympna House 1990).
- Children who have experienced child sexual assault are more likely to have experienced some other type of abuse. (Fergusson, Horwood & Lynskey 1997; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans & Herbison 1996)
- Because the offender is often a person well known and trusted to the child and their family, they can more easily arrange to be alone with the child –therefore the abuse is commonly repeated.
- Child sexual assault rarely involves violence because, instead of force, offenders use promises, threats and bribes to take advantage of their trusted relationship with the child's family and the subsequent powerlessness of the child. In some cases, this can go on for years. (NSW Child Protection Council 2000).
- The strategies employed by offenders to gain the compliance of children more often involve giving gifts, lavishing attention and attempting to form emotional bonds.
- Some form of the non-sexual physical contact preceded many sexual encounters with children. (Smallbone & Wortley 2000).

Cyberspace

Important Safety Tips for Parents

- Not only is the Internet a wonderful educational and social tool, it will be the major communication tool of the future. Internet illiteracy will be a severe disadvantage for future generations.
- But just like the real world, cyberspace comes with its own set of potential dangers. Going online means allowing the whole world into your child's own space.
- Pedophiles prowl cyberspace for potential victims, gravitating towards places where children and young people congregate. They prey on the vulnerable, who are often ignorant of the risks. A sexual predator

may access a popular youth chat site and pose as a fellow young person to gain their victim's trust before coercing them into sending revealing photographs or worse, arranging a face-to-face meeting.

- It is imperative to be aware of what your children are accessing, who they talk to and what information they share about themselves.
- It is crucial parents talk to their kids about the risk of being online.
- One of the most proactive steps you can take in protecting your child is to sit down with them and come up with your family's online safety rules.

Online Predators Want to Chat to Your Kids

The shocking statistics:

- Studies in 2000 revealed that 20 per cent of teenagers aged between 10 and 17 who regularly used the Internet, had received a sexual solicitation or approach in the prior year. Many said they had received an aggressive sexual solicitation (e.g. they were asked to participate in a face-to-face meeting or they were telephoned or sent regular mail, money or gifts; and 25 per cent had an unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people or people having sex). (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Crimes Against Children Research Center and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000).
- Only 25 per cent of children will tell a parent about an encounter with a predator who approached or solicited sex while on the internet and fewer than 10 per cent will report sexual solicitation to legal authorities. (i- SAFE Inc. 2006).
- Half of all high school students 'talk' in chat rooms or use instant messenger with strangers. Nearly half of all high school students have posted personal information that would allow them to be tracked such as their name, age and address. (i-SAFE Inc. 2006).
- More than half of all parents with children old enough to use the Internet say they're worried their children could be targeted for exploitation by online predators. But fewer than 50 per cent of parents say they directly supervise their child's use of the Internet and only 25 per cent reported loading specific software to protect their children. (Tucci, Goddard & Mitchell, 2004).

Online Offenders (Australian Institute of Family Studies)

The anonymity afforded to perpetrators has been seen by some as a contributor to online sexualized violence (Barak, 2005; Mackinnon, 1998). While there is some level of anonymity in the virtual environment itself, most contemporary users would be increasingly aware that this is limited; individual users can be tracked by Internet Service Providers in many cases (whether an ISP is willing to do so is another matter, which also brings up the question of privacy online users). Barak (2005) discussed the "online disinhibition effect" and argued that this leads offenders to act more "naturally," but also noted that this may be especially powerful when combined with the overtly "masculine" atmosphere of some online forums.

Reference: BREAK THE SILENCE: Issue 1, 2009. *Crystal Media.*
Cameron Boyd, VIRTUAL VIOLENCE, *Aust. Institute of Family Studies, ACSSA Newsletter, No. 21, 2009*

Laurel House Waiting List

Over the past years Laurel House has seen a steady increase in the number of clients accessing the Service. This past 12 months has resulted in clients being placed on a waiting list, however, they are able to access telephone and/or face to face crisis appointments. We ensure that all persons accessing receive an immediate service, therefore, please do continue to refer your clients to Laurel House.

The recent service provider evaluation highlighted that a number of workers are referring victims/survivors of rape, sexual assault and child sexual abuse to other Services due to the waiting list, but please be assured we will continue to offer services to all those who contact us.

Would you like to contribute to the Laurel House newsletter?

Laurel House is looking for people to contribute stories, poems and artwork to the newsletter to share with survivors of sexual assault, family members and service providers. Items can be published anonymously if requested. If you would like to contribute something to the newsletter please send to counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au or PO Box 1062 Launceston, 7250. All items will be carefully considered and published in upcoming newsletters.

We would appreciate any feedback or suggestions that you may have as we continue to develop our newsletter. Please call us on 6334 2740 or email counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au

Contact details Laurel House

PO Box 1062, Launceston 7250

Phone weekdays 8:30am – 5pm

(03) 6334 2740

After Hours Crisis Line

0409 800 394

Fax: (03) 6334 4234

Email: counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au

Website: www.laurelhouse.org.au

Useful Websites and Contact Numbers

Children

Bravehearts Inc. www.bravehearts.org.au

Australian Childhood Foundation www.childhood.org.au

Attempted Suicide and/or Self harm

Safe in Oz Pty Ltd. www.safeinoz.com.au

Time Out timeout. Email: timeout.tasmania.net.au

Kids Help Line www.kidshelpline.com.au

Beyond Blue www.yblue.com.au

Crisis Counselling

Laurel House www.laurelhouse.org.au counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au

North West Centre Against Sexual Assault Telephone 64319711

Sexual Assault Support Service Hobart Telephone 62311811

Lifeline www.lifeline.org.au Telephone 131114

Thank you to all the Community Groups, Organizations, Politicians and Individuals who have kindly donated gifts to include in our Christmas hampers. Without your kindness we would be unable to assist the many Clients and their families to put some cheer into their festivities.

We would like to advise that the Laurel House Day Service will be closed from 24th December until 5th January. The Crisis Service will be available during this time.



We would also like to thank all the Clients, Service Providers and Members of the Community for their continued support of Laurel House.

We wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas and New Year.