

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Annual Report 2014 - 2015

President's Report

During this year, the 25th Anniversary of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence it gives me great pleasure to deliver this President's Report. The year was marked with celebrations attended by a packed venue celebrating the milestone and included Members of Parliament in particular the Attorney General and local Members, and past members of staff and the Management Committee and many current and past supporters of the Service. The day included a very successful fundraising day facilitated by the local Member for Southport Mr Rob Molhoek for which the Service staff and Management Committee were very grateful.

I can report that although the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence has experienced an increase in demand and some very challenging impacts this year the staff has met the demands with the usual professionalism, and timely and comprehensive responses.

The year has been momentous for the focus on violence against women because of the searing spotlight on this epidemic created this year by the appointment of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year. For those working in the field for decades this spotlight has been a long time coming and the extraordinary lifelong commitment given to the women subjected to violence has been carried out for decades in the community by the staff of this Agency for one. The long overdue emphasis on the crimes of domestic violence must not swamp the equally prevalent and life limiting crimes of sexual violence which so often occurs in a domestic setting in the form of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence, or sexual crimes against other family members. It requires awareness and

advocacy from all of us to remind policy makers, community leaders and the media that most if not all domestic violence will involve a sexual component at some time, and aside from that sexual assault is a growing crime which police and court statistics illustrate, and the increase creates pressure on this Agency which must be addressed.

I wish to commend the Director once again for creating a strong and exceptionally professional and highly thought of service which through the superior efforts of staff, responds to clients and the community with specialised counselling and other innovative services.

This year has been tough and we have made some tough decisions to keep within budget. This has included the cutting of staff hours. Despite this the staff team has remained strong and committed to the cause.

The Counselling and Administration managers, Kellie and Narelle have truly exceeded their usual high standard work output, support to clients and staff due to sick leave resulting in increased workload which required skilful management in the face of growing demand. The counselling staff also deserve special acknowledgement as they have risen to the challenge of an increased workload with professionalism and compassion. I believe I can speak for the Management Committee in registering our deep appreciation to everyone for their extra contributions during that period.

I wish to acknowledge the core funding provided by Department of Communities and hope that the next funding cycle will include a much needed increase in funding to reinstate staff hours and to meet the growing demand for services.

Finally I wish to thank and acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the Management Committee who bring a unique and superb body of experience, knowledge, vital influence and commitment to the field in general and the Agency in particular. Your contribution is invaluable and the Agency is extremely fortunate in benefiting from your time and skill, many thanks.

I know that the Agency is in good hands due to the collective unique skill and commitment of the staff and committee and it gives me enormous pleasure to publicly commend their contribution.

Barbara Geoghegan

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Director's Report

I am pleased to present the Director's report for 2014/2015 which is the 25th year of operation of the agency.

Firstly I would like to thank and pay tribute to all of the members of the Management Committee who voluntarily gave their time to the governance of the organisation in the past year. Thank you to Barbara Gaygan, Casandra Steer, Terry Goldsworthy, Di Mangan, Louise McOrmond Plummer and Julia Clarke who joined the MC during the year. Your diverse backgrounds and unique individual skill sets add knowledge, expertise and wisdom to the Centre.

Secondly I would like to thank and pay tribute to all of the staff who were employed this past year – Kellie, Narelle, Anne, Isabell, Ana, Cristina, Leslie, Marjorie and Thi Thanh Tam Pham. This amazing team of women displays a strong commitment and passion to both responding to and ending sexual violence. They work tirelessly in a personally and professionally challenging area for award rates of pay that certainly do not reflect their expertise and professionalism. This year when our budget could not sustain a pay rise, staff volunteered to cut their hours so everyone kept their jobs and service delivery to vulnerable women was maintained. We are linked by our values, our compassion and our sense of humour which often sustains us. Even though some people might think this work is depressing we focus on the positive and believe that we can make a difference in supporting women beyond trauma to thrive and live amazing lives. To the whole staff team, I truly value your contribution to the agency through the support, counselling, education, administration and management work you do and the positive difference you make towards a safer Gold Coast community.

Achievements and challenges

This year our Sexual Assault Linkages Initiative (SALI) through strategic and innovative links with partners such as Gold Coast Cabs, Warrior Women Yoga, Women's Legal Service; Keating Lehn; Queensland Police; Gold Coast Health and Hospital; Telstra; women's refuge; media; mental health and alcohol and drug services achieved

- Enhanced awareness of sexual violence and GCCASV
- Increased networking
- Cross agency training
- Outreach of GGCASV counsellors to other agencies
- External agencies providing onsite services at GCCASV
- Partnering for specific projects / programs
- Development of MOU's and Protocols
- Better outcomes for clients

The initiative #WhatDoYouExpect was developed in conjunction with Kerrin Bradfield a sexology student from Curtin using the principles of harm minimisation and sex positivity. This project included a new website www.whatdoyouexpect.com.au aimed at 14-19 year olds centering around a range of statements designed to challenge young people to think about their expectations and realities. By addressing a number of key factors including; the false messaging in pornography, the importance of consent and ethical decision making, rights and responsibilities and safety, the website assists young people in the development of healthy strategies.

Under the internship program brokered with Bond University we welcomed interns Stacie Rae and Descenna Belperio who updated resources; researched; analysed data and developed a great 25 year snapshot document.

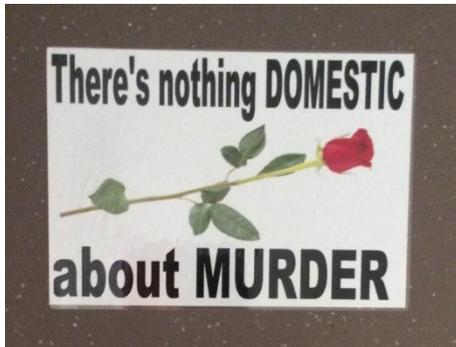
Sexual Violence Awareness Month 2014 was the most successful ever reaching a wide range of people through 20 events, beginning with a community breakfast at Sharks attended by over a hundred people; a fundraising lunch at Parkwood hosted by Rob Molhoek; school presentations; Candle lighting event; survivor speak out; clothesline project; launch of new website and 5 new resources and enhanced media coverage.



The biggest challenge this year was increased demand for counselling and support with no corresponding increase in resources. There was no waiting list during the year and due to priority scheduling of crisis appointments, all clients were responded to within their requested time frame.

The continued use of technology and social media in the area of sexual violence has continued to be a challenge with stalking, multiple dating apps, prevalence of sexting and revenge porn a growing concern for the future.

The issue of Domestic Violence homicide was in sharp focus this year with an increased number of deaths occurring in Queensland. GCCASV organised numerous Red Rose Rallies on the Gold Coast to raise awareness of and commemorate each life lost. The agency also joined Betty Taylor to manage a Facebook page and Petition "Calling for a Queensland Review of Domestic Violence deaths". A petition containing 9788 signatures was handed over to Queensland Premiers Office in June.



Trends

This year has seen an increase in:

- complex cases often relating to the intersection between sexual violence, domestic violence, mental health, homelessness and alcohol and other drugs reminding us that sexual violence does not happen in isolation. A best practice response considers the whole person and the context of their life and is able to wrap other supports around the victim/survivor utilising strategic linkages with other services.
- Continuing increase in presentations relating to Intimate Partner Sexual Violence (IPSV) reminding us that women who are subjected to domestic violence rarely enjoy a safe, consensual sexual relationship with their partners.
- Referrals from police is also evidenced by a 30% increase in sexual violence being reported to police in the Gold Cost District this past year.



- Workplace Sexual Harassment where women are staying in unsafe employment positions because

they are worried they will not find safe alternative employment in a timely manner.

- Alcohol and drug facilitated sexual violence has continued involving both casual and long term partners affecting women of all ages.
- Requests for individual advocacy have increased reflecting the complexity of situations and the far reaching effects of sexual violence.
- Levels of violence perpetrated and physical injuries sustained in many recent rapes is frightening. This is evidenced by increased referrals from the Emergency departments of Robina and Gold Coast University Hospitals. It is my belief that we are witness to the trickle down effect from Pornography to into reality.

I would like to thank the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services who provide our core funding and I would also like to thank of all of our supporters and donors for their assistance in terms of money and goods in kind. This year more than ever we relied on small grants and donations to assist with service delivery. I would like to recognise the support of all local state members in particular the Hon Rob Molhoek; all GCCC in particular Cr Dawn Crichlow and Cr William Owen Jones; Dominique Vincenzi Lummus; Bill Wakefield from Combined Martial Arts Academy; Vicky Hogg from Warrior Women Yoga; RACV Royal Pines Resort; Gold Coast Cabs; Rotary Club of Southport; Keating Lehn; Golden Harvest Fellowship; Grill'd and Global Spirited Women.



In conclusion, I look forward to the challenges and triumphs of the future with enthusiasm and focus, confident that as an organisation we can grow our funding base and strategic partnerships in order to continue high quality service delivery and work towards a peaceful world.

Di Macleod

Counselling and Education Manager's Report

In our 25th year of operation, the amazing team at the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence once again provided a high quality and comprehensive array of services to women and young women on the Gold Coast whose lives were affected by sexual violence. These services have ranged from professional individual counselling, producing and distributing information and resources, advocacy, group work and support through the legal process; as well as short term counselling for the supporters of victim/survivors.

The counsellors employ an eclectic range of strategies and therapies to address the many adverse impacts of sexual violence experienced by women; women who all have diverse needs and goals. These interventions are all underpinned by a feminist framework and trauma response care and can consist of; psycho-education, narrative therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, mindfulness, emotional release, schema work and debriefing.

With the demand for counselling and support increasing, the dedicated team conducted a total of 6506 sessions this last year. The majority of these were centre based; including face to face, phone and internet sessions; while 125 outreach sessions were also conducted. The outreach appointments primarily occurred in high schools, with others taking place in venues such as neighbourhood and community centres.

In addition, 320 women participated in 15 diverse groups including; self esteem and self care, mindfulness, healthy relationships, self defence, yoga, goal setting, painting and other creative arts.

In total, 3079 women, young women and their supporters engaged in counselling with us, comprising of 694 new clients and 2385 continuing clients. This signifies an 18.5 % increase in new clients accessing the agency this year, compared to the last financial year. Furthermore, a diverse range of cultures and communities were represented through the new clients including; Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, African, South American, Maori, Pacific Islander and the Deaf community.

In the last financial year there was a 145% increase in referrals received from the police, largely through SupportLink. The agency also experienced a 56% increase in referrals from the Emergency Departments of local hospitals.

Support and advocacy undertaken on behalf of women as they intersect with other services and systems is another important component of the work

performed by the centre. During this year, staff supported women in their interactions with high schools; tertiary institutions and other further education organisations; employment agencies and employers; Centrelink; Department of Housing; mental health services; refuges; domestic violence services; alcohol and other drug services; private psychologists and other practitioners; hospitals; police; the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Victim Assist Queensland; other legal services and the Department of Child Safety.

In addition to our intervention services, the centre is committed to prevention work which raises awareness of the issue of sexual violence and works towards creating a safer Gold Coast community. During the last year, 19,516 people benefited from education, information and training sessions. Topics such as the context, prevalence and impacts of sexual violence; the components of a healthy relationship; consent and safety are explored utilising a range of strategies in a variety of settings.



The agency is also committed to producing and distributing informative and high quality resources and over 10,000 magazines, pamphlets, posters, booklets, postcards, stickers and CDs were distributed throughout the year. New resources are continually being developed and distributed to clients, their supporters and the wider community; with a growing emphasis on utilising technology, the internet and social media. This year, the development of the website www.whatdoyouexpect.com.au was a particular highlight. The interactive site provides young people with an opportunity to explore issues such as healthy relationships, consent and sexting.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues for their commitment, professionalism, support and humour. Congratulations on the fantastic work you do every day, making a significant and positive difference in many women's lives.

Finally, to all of the women who have attended the Centre, your bravery and resilience constantly provides us with inspiration and on behalf of the counselling team, I thank you for allowing us the privilege of being a part of your healing journey.

Kellie Wilk

