sexual assault does happen
A booklet for people who have experienced sexual assault and their supporters
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Sexual assault does happen was written on Ngunnawal land
Sexual assault is an abuse of power and a crime. It does not discriminate, unfortunately anyone can be a victim of sexual assault: women, children and young people, men, older people, people with diverse identities and sexualities, people living with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from all socio-economic backgrounds and people who are homeless.

Unfortunately sexual assault is common, with a meta-analysis of studies showing that between 15 and 30 percent of females and 3 to 15 percent of males experiencing sexual abuse as a child (Fergusson & Mullen, 1999), and one in 6 adult women in Australia experience sexual assault after the age of 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim. The perpetrator can be a parent or step-parent, a sibling, a relative, a carer, a family friend, a neighbour, someone known from the community, through school, someone providing service, a partner, an ex-partner, a marital spouse, a peer or a colleague. Sexual assault can also be perpetrated by someone the person has just met or a complete stranger. One Australian prevalence study indicated that 41 percent of offenders were relatives, and 97 percent of offenders were male (Fleming 1997).

Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. It is a misuse of power that is unwanted and causes harm. Many perpetrators use tricks, threats or coercion or in some other way create vulnerability. Others will use physical force or violence which may result in physical injuries. Nobody ever asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted. There are no circumstances when it is okay. The person or people responsible for sexual assault are those who perpetrate it, those who sexually assault others are always responsible for their actions.

SEXUAL ASSAULT IS NOT ABOUT SEX
It is important to understand that sexual assault is not about sex, it is about power and control where someone acts in an abusive way over another person. Sexual assault takes place when a person disregards, ignores, or violates another person’s free will, thoughts, wishes and right to make decisions about their body. Sexual assault is never okay, it causes harm and often leaves the victim feeling humiliated, dominated and degraded.

You own your body and you have the right to choose who touches it and when!

A few words on terminology
Except where the term ‘sexual assault’ is used within a legal definition (see section: What does the Law say about Sexual Offences), the terms ‘sexual assault’ and ‘sexual abuse’ are used in this booklet interchangeably and refer to the broad range of sexual behaviors and sexual conduct towards another person, including both contact and non-contact behaviours, which are unwanted or where the person is unable to give consent (see section When is Consent Negated?).

Different people refer to those who have experienced sexual assault as ‘victims’ and others use the term ‘survivor’. Individuals who have experienced sexual assault may prefer one word over the other and some use each of the terms to describe their experience at different times. When a person has experienced trauma, they may feel overwhelmed or in crisis, their capacity to cope can be overloaded and they may feel paralysed. The word ‘victim’ can reflect this difficult and distressing time, which may last days, weeks, months and for some people years. It can also conjure up the sense that the person who experienced the sexual assault was subjected to the tactics of an offender. The word ‘victim’ is also used by police and in criminal proceedings to denote that the person who has experienced an offence is
The first priority after a sexual assault is safety. In an emergency, you or another person can contact police through 000, and if you wish to request police presence, you can ring 131 444.

Victims also have a right to apply for a protection order through the Magistrates Court (see section ‘Protection Orders’ for more information) to protect the person from being contacted by the offender.

Sometimes sexual assault can result in injuries. If you have experienced sexual assault and it has resulted in bleeding, difficulty breathing, chest pain or injury, you can contact an ambulance for immediate attention on 000. It is important that physical effects resulting from the sexual assault and any concerns regarding sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy are addressed as a matter of priority (see section ‘Medical Follow-up’ and ‘Forensic Examination’ for more information). Often having a medical check-up can provide a sense of relief knowing that any physical concerns are being attended to.

The terms ‘offender’ and ‘perpetrator’ are used in this booklet for those who perpetrate sexual assault and sexual abuse, with the exception of the reporting and legal process section where the terms ‘defendant’ and ‘accused person’ are also used, reflecting the language used in criminal proceedings.

The word ‘survivor’ is sometimes used in a therapeutic context and for some people it represents resilience and the ability to take action. The term can capture a sense of resourcefulness and strength in overcoming obstacles despite having gone through immense trauma. This booklet uses the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ interchangeably and sometimes uses the terms together.

not responsible for the offence. The word ‘survivor’ is sometimes used in a therapeutic context and for some people it represents resilience and the ability to take action. The term can capture a sense of resourcefulness and strength in overcoming obstacles despite having gone through immense trauma. This booklet uses the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ interchangeably and sometimes uses the terms together.
Support
If you are unsure about what to do, or do not want to go to hospital by yourself or want help from someone other than a friend or family member, please contact us at the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) on: (02) 6247 2525. We provide crisis support through our telephone service between 7.00am and 11.00pm, seven days a week every day of the year, including Christmas and public holidays. We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with Police and the Forensic Medical Sexual Assault Care (FAMSAC) Service, whereby we can be contacted 24 hours a day to attend the hospital or police station and provide support to victims who report or need a medical/forensic examination during or outside normal business hours. Our counsellors are trained in providing support, crisis counselling and advocacy, and we can help you through these processes and make sure your rights and wishes are heard and respected. We encourage you to speak with us, you have rights (see section below) and sometimes talking to someone impartial can help you to work out what you want to do and we will support you in the decisions you wish to make.

Your rights
Sexual assault can leave a person feeling disempowered. After the sexual assault, one way of gaining back some power is to choose what happens next. It is your right to:
- Seek medical support or refuse it.
- Report to police or refuse to report to police.
- Decide who to tell, and who not to tell.
- Refuse certain services or certain workers.
- Seek counselling or refuse counselling. Following a sexual assault, it can be difficult to know which choices to make, especially when there are so many choices to make. It can feel overwhelming, like things are out of control. Sometimes people will choose to decline certain options and engage with them later. For example, a person may not wish to report to police or receive counselling immediately following sexual assault, however, they may change their mind later.

Some family members, friends or work colleagues may insist that the victim must report to police. It is important to remember that if at any stage you wish to stop a medical check, a counselling session or statement with police, it is your right to do so. You do not have to speak about what happened if you do not want to.

If you are unsure about whether you have been sexually assaulted
Sometimes a person may be clear that what they have experienced is sexual assault, and other people may be unsure. Anyone who has experienced something of a sexual nature which they did not freely agree to or were unable to agree to, has experienced sexual assault, sexual violence, sexual harassment or sexual abuse. If you know you have been sexually assaulted or you are unsure, you can speak with a counsellor at the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) to discuss your feelings and the impacts and effects of what has happened to you. If you would like, we can arrange some counselling at the Centre for you, or an appropriate referral.
Getting medical attention
Following a sexual assault, the most important thing is safety, followed by medical attention - when there has been physical contact. People who have experienced a sexual assault may be concerned about injuries, aches and pains, the risk of pregnancy or whether they have contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care (FAMSAC) service provides sensitive and high quality medical follow-up for people who have experienced sexual assault. It is staffed by doctors and nurses who are trained specifically to work with victims of sexual assault, they are very knowledgeable about how sexual assaults can impact a person. Their goal is to focus on helping the victim/survivor become physically healthy again. FAMSAC have both male and female medical practitioners available so victims can choose the gender of the person they feel most comfortable with.

FAMSAC can provide testing for STIs—which may take several days before they show up in the tests—and offer the emergency contraception in instances where pregnancy may be of concern. The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS is very rare, however, in instances where the risk is high, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) may be provided to reduce the risk of contracting the virus. FAMSAC provides follow-up within 48 hours following the medical care/examination and with consent, can offer follow-up for three months.

People can bring a support person with them when they attend FAMSAC for a medical and/or forensic examination, a counsellor from the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre is available 24 hours a day to attend FAMSAC for support of victim/survivors having a medical/forensic examination.

FAMSAC services are free and confidential and the service records are kept separate from main hospital records. FAMSAC publish a number of fact sheets related to medical care following sexual assault, including Rape Related Pregnancy. These fact sheets are available through their website (see details in the Contacts list at the end of this booklet).

FAMSAC is at the Canberra Hospital in Woden behind the National Capital Private Hospital (NACAP) and it is co-located with the Canberra Sexual Health Centre, the contact details are listed at the back of this booklet.
Forensic examination

Following a recent sexual assault, FAMSAC are able to collect potential forensic evidence as part of their medical examination for police investigation if the person gives consent. Forensic evidence can be collected within 72 hours of a sexual assault, indecent assault or following injuries resulting from domestic violence, however, it should be collected as soon as possible.

At the time of the examination, the person may not be sure whether they want to make a report to the police or not. When a person is unsure, FAMSAC can collect potential forensic evidence and store it for up to three months whilst the person decides if they wish to engage in the criminal justice process.

Forensic evidence may include but is not limited to bodily fluids – such as semen or saliva - from the offender found on the body of the victim or on their clothes, injuries on the victim’s body indicating restraint or force, bruising, scratch marks, grazing and vegetation or gravel if the offence(s) took place outdoors (Judicial Commission of New South Wales, 2013).

An important note to make is that non-consensual sexual intercourse does not always leave evidence of trauma on the victim’s body, and the absence of injuries or forensic evidence does not mean that a sexual assault has not taken place. Forensic evidence can assist with the prosecution of sexual offences; however victims/survivors who wish to report or engage in the criminal justice process should not be put-off from this engagement in the absence of forensic evidence, as successful prosecution is still possible.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is a crime in all jurisdictions throughout Australia. People who engage sexually with another person must have consent from the other person otherwise they can be charged with committing a sexual offence. Consent must be provided for the range of sexual acts, including sexual intercourse which the A.C.T. Crimes Act defines as:

- The penetration, to any extent, of the genitalia or anus of a person by any part of the body of another person
- The penetration, to any extent, of the genitalia or anus of a person by an object, being penetration carried out by another person
- The introduction of any part of the penis of a person into the mouth of another person
- Fellatio (stimulation of the penis using the tongue or lips)
- Cunnilingus (stimulation of the female genitals using the tongue or lips)

(See Crimes Act 1900, Part 3 Sexual Offences, Section 50, R83 –Effective 24/4/2013, pp39-40)

What does the law say about sexual offences?
What is the age of consent?
Sexual assault legislation differs in every state in Australia, in the A.C.T. the age of consent is 16. Anyone who has sex with someone under the age of 16 is committing a criminal offence. There is a defence to prosecution clause in the A.C.T legislation which can be enacted when there are two young people engaging in sexual intercourse and they are over the age of 10 and within two years of each other (for example, a 14 and a 16 year old), or in the instance that reasonable grounds can be established that the defendant believed the person they were having sexual contact with was 16 or older. In each of these instances however, each person must give consent, otherwise the defendant is considered to have committed a sexual offence.

When is consent negated?
Engaging sexually with another person who cannot freely give consent is a crime. People cannot freely give consent if they are under the influence of substances or if they are asleep or physically helpless and in a range of other circumstances.

The law makes it clear that a person cannot give consent if that consent:
- Is caused by the infliction of violence or force on the person, or on a third person who is present or nearby
- Is caused by a threat to inflict violence or force on the person, or on a third person who is present or nearby
- Is caused by the use extortion against the person or another person
- Is caused by a threat to publicly humiliate or disgrace, or to physically or mentally harass, the person or another person
- Is caused by the effect of intoxicating liquor, a drug or an anaesthetic
- Is caused by a mistaken belief as to the identity of that other person
- Is caused by a fraudulent misrepresentation of any fact made by the other person, or by a third person to the knowledge of the other person
- Is caused by the abuse by the other person of his or her position of authority over, or professional or other trust in relation to, the person
- Is caused by the person’s physical helplessness or mental incapacity to understand the nature of the act in relation to which the consent is given
- Is caused by the unlawful detention of the person.

(See Crimes Act 1900, Part 3 Sexual Offences, Section 67, R83 –Effective 24/4/2013, pp.55-56)

If consent is given in the above circumstances, the person’s consent is automatically negated and the person engaging with the person who is unable to consent, is committing a criminal offence.
Other sexual offences

There are a range of other sexual offences which are included in A.C.T legislation. A person can be criminally prosecuted for the following offences:

- Engaging in sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a young person who is under special care
- Engaging in sexual intercourse or sexual contact with their daughter or son, step-child, grand-child, great-grand-child or other lineal ancestor or lineal descendant
- Engaging in sexual intercourse with their sister, half-sister, brother or half-brother
- Abducting or unlawfully detaining someone with the intent of engaging in sexual intercourse with them
- Using a child for the production of child pornography etc
- Trading in child pornography
- Possessing child pornography
- Using the internet or electronic means to suggest to a young person under the age of 16 that they take part in or watch someone else taking part in an act of a sexual nature.


The impacts and effects of sexual assault and abuse can be very broad-ranging (see section on Impacts and Effects in this booklet). If you have experienced any form of sexual assault or abuse, please do not hesitate to contact the CRCC for support, we can offer you crisis support, counselling or if you prefer, an appropriate referral.

Stalking

Stalking is also a crime in the A.C.T. A person who stalks another person with the intent to harass, cause apprehension, fear or harm in the person they are stalking—or someone else—can be charged with a stalking offence. Stalking involves any of these forms of intent and boundary violations where the offender, on two or more occasions:

- Follows or approaches their victim
- Loiters near the victim, watches, approaches or enters the victim’s home or workplace or other location
- Keeps the victim under surveillance
- Interferes with property in the possession of victim
- Gives or sends offensive material to the victim or leaves offensive material where it is likely to be found by, given to or brought to their victim’s attention
- Telephones, sends electronic messages to or otherwise contacts the victim
- Sends electronic messages about the victim to anybody else
- Makes electronic messages about the stalked person available to anybody else
- Acts covertly in a way that could reasonably be expected to arouse apprehension or fear in their victim
- Engages in conduct amounting to intimidation, harassment or molestation of the victim

(See Crimes Act 1900, Part 2 Offences Against the Person, Section 35, R83 –Effective 24/4/2013, pp18-19)

Stalking can produce an intense amount of fear in the person being stalked. If you are experiencing stalking, it is important to know that help is available. Please do not hesitate to contact police on 000 if you are concerned about your immediate safety, and you are welcome to use the CRCC crisis line for support and to access counselling services.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can come in many forms and can occur in the workplace, at school, university or other education institutions and within the community. 1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men experience some form of sexual harassment in the workplace (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008).
The Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) identifies that sexual harassment can occur on one or more occasions, be direct or indirect, and may include:

- staring or leering
- unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against a person or unwelcome touching
- suggestive comments or jokes
- insults or taunts of a sexual nature
- intrusive questions or statements about another person’s private life
- displaying posters, magazines or screen savers of a sexual nature
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages (sexting)
- inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates
- behaviour that may also be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

By its very nature, sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome and can leave a person feeling embarrassed, offended, shocked, humiliated and fearful. Many of the impacts and effects are similar to those experienced by victims/survivors of sexual assault. Sometimes the person subjected to sexual harassment may be so traumatised that they suffer serious emotional consequences and may not be able to perform their job properly or concentrate whilst studying. The study or work environment may be so hostile and intimidating that it causes the person subjected to sexual harassment to leave their job or education and look elsewhere. Sexual harassment can be demoralising on everyone within range of the harassment.

In recent years, multimedia and social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter, have been increasingly used in the perpetration of sexual offences and sexual harassment.

In Australia, the Sex Discrimination Act makes sexual harassment unlawful in the workplace, in education, employment and in accommodation and in the provision of goods and services. People who feel they have been sexually harassed can make a complaint in writing, via email or over the phone to the Australian Human Rights Commission. You can find contact details for the Commission at the back of this booklet in the Contacts section.
assaulted have done something to deserve it. People may play down the effects because they think it helps the victim or simply do not understand that sexual assault is illegal. These myths are also utilised by the perpetrators of sexual assault to make the victim feel they are to blame or there isn’t anyone they can go to. Allowing such myths to remain unchallenged creates a world where a victim of sexual assault can be further traumatised or not seek help or justice. Below are some other common myths.

### Myths about sexual assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They didn’t say ‘no’ therefore it’s not sexual assault</td>
<td>Consent cannot be assumed just because a person does not verbalise the word ‘no’. There are many circumstances when a person is unable to say ‘no’ – for example, they are asleep, they are scared or feel threatened, the perpetrator is in a position of power or authority or has manipulated or tricked them or because they are under the influence of substances. Even in some circumstances where a person says ‘yes’, due to their age, their position of vulnerability in the relationship or physical or mental capacity at the time, they were unable to provide consent (See section in booklet: When is consent negated?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The victim did something to deserve being sexually assaulted</td>
<td>There are no actions anyone can ever undertake that make sexual assault permissible. Sexual assault is a crime and nobody ever deserves to be sexually assaulted. Perpetrators will often use tactics to make the victim feel they did something to deserve the sexual offences, but the offender is always responsible for their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was the victim’s fault because they were drinking and/or took drugs</td>
<td>No one ever asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted, and people under the influence of drugs and or alcohol are unable to provide consent. Some perpetrators use drugs and or alcohol to create vulnerability in their victims; the offender is always responsible for their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people are sexually assaulted by strangers</td>
<td>The majority of sexual offences are perpetrated by a person known to the victim. In the ABS Personal Safety Survey (2005), 89% of people who reported experiencing sexual assault before the age of 15, were victimised by someone known to them. Most commonly, child sexual abuse is perpetrated by a male relative, a family friend, acquaintance or neighbour or another known person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>Reality</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I was raped I had an orgasm/erection, was it still rape?</td>
<td>Our bodies respond to stimulus. Biological responses to rape are normal and are often something many survivors feel very shameful about and keep secret. Having a sexual response or orgasm during the course of sexual assault is well-documented. Some women do experience orgasms and some men have erections when they are being sexually assaulted because the body has an automatic response which is beyond our rational control and having this response does not in any way make the sexual assault 'okay', and doesn’t mean the person enjoyed it. If a person does not give informed consent, regardless of how their body reacts, it is still a sexual assault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men rape because they cannot control their sexual urges</td>
<td>There is no evidence to substantiate this claim, men do have control over their bodies and over what they do with their sexual urges. The myth that men can’t help themselves is used to blame the victim for being ‘desirable’ or ‘tempting’ to the perpetrator, and is an attempt to excuse their actions. Perpetrators have the ability to choose not to violate another person; the only person responsible for sexually assaulting another person is the offender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s not rape if they’re in a relationship</td>
<td>Sexual assault can occur between two people who have just met, within short or long term relationships and within marriage. The A.C.T Crimes Act specifies that marriage is no bar to conviction. Just because a person is in a relationship or married to their partner, does not mean either person can engage sexually with their partner without their consent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The impacts and effects of sexual assault can be broad-ranging, and will depend on a range of factors, including the age of the person at the time of the abuse, the number and types of incidents, whether other forms of abuse may have taken place, the relationship to and tactics of the perpetrator, responses to disclosures and the amount and type of support received, whether that be from friends, family and/or professionals.

Social impacts
You may have experienced a range of social impacts as a result of your experience of sexual assault. Like many survivors, you may have known the person or people who sexually assaulted you, and after disclosure, others around you may have rallied around you in support or alternatively responded with disbelief or had other negative responses. If the perpetrator was a family member or relative, you may find that you have disconnected with or have less frequent contact with other members of the family (Golding, Wilsnack, & Cooper 2002) and there may also be challenges around family gatherings, such as birthdays, Christmases, weddings, marriages and funerals.

If the perpetrator was a partner, you may find there have been some friends who you cannot speak with any more because of their continuing association with the perpetrator. Some of the psychological and emotional impacts may affect how comfortable you feel in social situations.

There may also be occasions where you have to consider who to trust with knowledge of your experiences and depending on how the disclosures were made, there may be some people at school, within your family, family friends, colleagues at work or people within your community who you did not want to know, but who have found out inadvertently, perhaps by someone sharing the information without first asking you for permission.

All of these social impacts may have put strain on your relationships and also have emotional and psychological impacts. Trying to manage the multi-faceted social impacts can be difficult and exhausting. Nobody should have to deal with the social or any other impacts of sexual assault alone.

If you are experiencing any of the social impacts resulting from the experience of trauma, please speak with your counsellor about it and if you are not receiving counselling, we encourage you to speak with some people you trust, or consider contacting CRCC for crisis support or to access counselling.

Emotional impacts
Being sexually assaulted, sexually abused, harassed or stalked can leave you feeling overwhelmed and pushes you outside your normal coping abilities. Following sexual assault or abuse, it is normal to experience a range of emotions, which may include fear, anguish, numbness, anger, sadness, anxiety, shame or embarrassment.

Many survivors also express feelings of humiliation and hopelessness and it is not uncommon for survivors to say they feel “dirty” and that they need to wash themselves constantly. You may find yourself wanting to isolate, or alternatively, be with people all the time. There is no right and wrong way to feel, everyone has different reactions and if you find yourself struggling to cope or the emotional impacts are affecting your relationships with those you are closest to, help is available from CRCC for both you and those who are supporting you.

You may also experience fluctuating moods from day to day and even hour to hour, or feel depressed and struggle to pull yourself from an overwhelming or
constant state of sadness. Depression is a common effect of sexual assault and abuse. It is not something a person can ‘snap out of’, it can take time, counselling and sometimes medication to help manage or resolve. If you find yourself experiencing these emotions, or prolonged sadness, worthlessness, indifference, long or unexplained crying spells, low energy or persistent fatigue and a loss of interest and pleasure in activities you previously enjoyed, it is important that you get help and support.

**Physical and behavioural impacts**

Following the sexual assault or abuse, you may have experienced physical or medical concerns which needed to or still need to be addressed. Survivors may have to decide what to do about unwanted pregnancy (Holmes, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 1996) or have tests and intervention for STIs or injuries resulting from the assault(s). All physical impacts are incredibly important to address as soon as possible. Other impacts may include, amongst others, pelvic pain, gastrointestinal issues, gynecological and pregnancy complications, migraines, frequent headaches and back pain (Jewkes & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). It is also common for survivors to experience body memories in which physical sensations related to the abuse are triggered or re-experienced.

Since the sexual assault or abuse happened, you may have found your appetite has been effected in the short or longer-term, you may not want to eat as much as before or at all, or you may find yourself binging or ‘comfort eating’ which in the longer-term may affect your physical health and self-esteem. If you find yourself becoming preoccupied with food, binge eating or abusing diet pills, you can ask for help.

Some survivors of sexual assault and abuse choose to ‘self-medicate’ by using drugs, alcohol or other substances to numb the memory of the experiences or feelings of hopelessness or depression. Substance misuse can affect a survivor’s interest in healthy activities and hobbies, may have a detrimental affect on work or school performance and can have longer-term negative health impacts. Alcohol and non-prescription drugs and other substances generally only work temporarily and are not a long-term solution to managing the impacts of trauma.

Withdrawal from alcohol and some other substances which a person’s body has become dependent on, can be dangerous if attempted without adequate medical supervision and support. If you are using drugs, alcohol or other substances to help deal with the impacts of your experience of sexual assault or abuse, please access support for yourself. You can contact CRCC for counselling and support or referral to an appropriate drug and alcohol counsellor or service.

Since the sexual assault or abuse took place, you may have found that the relationship with your body and how you view yourself has changed. Because they feel so bad about themselves, some survivors find themselves making decisions about their body that may have harmful impacts, such as engaging in unprotected or risky sexual activity or engaging with unhealthy sexual partners. Often some of the unhealthy decisions are based on very low self-esteem and issues with body image which are common impacts of trauma. If you find yourself engaging in activities which are risky or unhealthy for yourself, you can speak with your counsellor about these, and if you don’t have a counsellor, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with someone you trust who can help, or consider contacting CRCC or another agency for support.

**Psychological impacts**

You may find that the experience of sexual assault or abuse has affected your ability to concentrate and make decisions. It takes time to recover from the impacts of sexual assault and abuse and if you are in crisis, it is suggested you hold off making any big decisions. At CRCC we recognise sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or stalking as traumatic, and that they may result in some people developing a range of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Not everyone will experience the same impacts and effects, but if the sooner any of the emotional and psychological impacts can be addressed the less likely they will cause long-term problems.

Many of the survivors who have come to the CRCC have talked about their struggles with thoughts such as “Why me?”; “If only...”; “What if...”; “How could this happen...”; “What did I do wrong?” Survivors can find themselves trying to find a reason to explain what has happened, something to explain why they were sexually assaulted or why the person did what they did. It is a common reaction to trauma to be thinking these types of thoughts, a lot of people do because they are trying to understand and make sense of what is a very traumatic experience.
Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about sexual assault in the community which can make a survivor feel as though they were somehow responsible or could have prevented what happened. Often offenders use tactics to try and place responsibility for what has happened onto the victim/survivor, or try and minimise what has happened, convince them that it was something the victim/survivor did or something they were wearing or said that caused the abuse or made it okay. It is important to know that sexual assault and abuse are never justified under any circumstances. If the perpetrator chose to respect you and not to violate, abuse, trick, coerce or manipulate you, the assault or abuse would never have happened. Perpetrators can control their actions and decisions. It is important to remember that you are not to blame for what happened. The perpetrator chose to sexually assault you, nothing you did or didn’t do, said or didn’t say, gave anyone the right to sexually assault or abuse you.

You own your body and you have the right to choose who touches it and when! Some other common psychological impacts many survivors struggle with include thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide. The effects of sexual assault can be very emotionally, mentally and/or physically painful and sadly many survivors think about hurting themselves or suicide.

It is important to remember you do not have to go through this alone. We encourage you to try talking to people about your thoughts, if you cannot or do not want to talk to your friends and/or family, you can contact CRCC or one of the other services listed in the contact list. If you are thinking about suicide please put your safety and wellbeing first and ask for help. Try and share your thoughts with someone you trust or a professional who understands the impacts of trauma. We encourage you to dispose of anything which you have obtained to hurt yourself with. Always remember there are other options, and as hard as it is to keep going sometimes, you can get through this, and we are here to help you. If you have found yourself struggling with thoughts of suicide or self-harm, you can contact us on our crisis line, and we can offer you crisis phone support and we can discuss counselling if you are not already receiving it.
Over the last ten years, there has been more community awareness about the use of substances by perpetrators which are given to victims without their knowledge to create vulnerability in order to sexually assault them. This form of abuse is called ‘drug facilitated sexual assault’ or ‘drink spiking’. Some perpetrators will add drugs or purposefully increase the amount of alcohol in a person’s drinks or encourage the victim to continue drinking with the purpose of sexually assaulting them. If you are a survivor of drug facilitated sexual assault, it is important to know that when a person is under the influence of alcohol or substances, they can no longer give consent to have sex, so anyone who has been sexual with you has committed a sexual offence.

You may find that you have experienced a range of psychological impacts, including some of the ones mentioned in this booklet; you may also have additional impacts resulting from having little or no memory of the assault occurring, or on the other hand, having memories of what happened, but not being able to react due to the drugs or alcohol in your system. It can be overwhelming to find out that someone has done something to your body when you were not fully conscious, or to have been conscious of what was happening but unable to do anything about it. It is important that you get the support you need and deserve to process the impacts you have experienced. If you do not already have support, please speak with a trusted friend or family member who you feel will be able to offer you support and understanding, and/or contact us at the CRCC or another agency (see Contact section of this booklet).

Whilst there are a range of other psychological impacts that victims/survivors can face, it is worth mentioning one more in this section. It is not uncommon for victims/survivors to form an unhealthy emotional bond towards their perpetrator that is based in trauma, especially if the abuse occurred over a long period of time. In its extreme form, some victims/survivors can develop what has been called ‘Stockholm Syndrome’, which gets its name from a hostage situation in Stockholm where victims who were held captive ended up supporting their captors. There are many reasons for its occurrence, including psychological tactics used by the perpetrator and psychological capacities employed by the victim/survivor to cope with the overwhelming situation. If the survivor was held by the perpetrator for an extended period of time, the survivor may start to “normalise” the experience in order to help them process and survive an inhuman connection.

It can be very confusing for the survivor as well as their loved ones and supporters if the survivor goes back to the abusive relationship, expresses good feelings towards the perpetrator. It can be very difficult for some people to break a trauma bond, no matter how abusive the relationship was or is, especially when threats of violence, or loss of family, money or status are made. It is important to remember that victims in this situation can genuinely feel they are in an appropriate ‘relationship’. It can be very difficult for them to see otherwise, and some people are never able to do so. The CRCC can support anyone who has experienced sexual assault in the context of being in a captive situation or where the dynamics between the perpetrator and the victim/survivor were blurred into an unhealthy bond. If you are a survivor or family member of someone who has experienced sexual abuse in this context, please ask for support.
Sleep disruption
Sexual assault can affect your sleep patterns. In order to sleep properly, you need to feel safe and secure. When you have been assaulted, your ability to trust and feel safe can be affected, which can result in insomnia or fitful sleep. Constantly thinking about what happened, being fearful of your safety, worrying about what other people think or concern about the future can also keep you awake at night. Sleep is also a time where the brain’s normal defences are weakened. This means you can experience nightmares which hold the same emotions you felt at the time of being assaulted. Nightmares can occur if you are living in fear of being assaulted again. Any disruption to sleep can affect your ability to function during the day, it can cause you to become lethargic, have poor concentration, irritable and anxious. It can also reduce your ability to cope with other stresses you are trying to manage. Sleep disruption is experienced by almost all survivors of sexual assault and abuse, it is a normal reaction to trauma, and with time and support, these impacts can be mitigated. If you are struggling with sleep disruption, you can speak with your counsellor or ring the CRCC crisis line to discuss some strategies that assist in creating more internal and external safety as well as strategies to increase sleep and help manage the impacts which are causing the disrupted sleep.

Flashbacks
A flashback is a memory of past trauma which appears and feels as though it is currently happening. Flashbacks affect all the senses, even making you believe you smell the same smells, and feel the same contact on your body. They can be just as terrifying and traumatic as the sexual assault. Flashbacks are usually ‘triggered’ usually by stimuli similar to an occurrence in the original trauma, such as a certain smell, sound, sensation or sight that reminds you of the trauma. Flashbacks range in length and severity, with some sufferers feeling flashback is just as real as the original trauma. Flashbacks are the minds way of trying to make sense of what has happened. Flashbacks can cause overwhelming distress to survivors, learning skills to help manage them is important for your recovery. You can speak with a counsellor at the CRCC or another professional with experience in working with survivors of trauma to assist with developing strategies to help manage flashbacks.
This section takes into account special considerations regarding sexual assault faced by those in different populations and communities.

**Children**

The sexual assault of children can happen at any age and can comprise a broad range of intrusive and inappropriate sexual engagement of a child, often by a known and trusted person. It can involve both contact and/or non-contact activities with a child that is of a sexual nature. The effects of child sexual abuse can include mental health impacts and adjustment in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Factors which can affect the nature of impacts include the child’s age at the time of the abuse, the child’s gender, the form, duration and severity of the abuse, the relationship with the perpetrator and the betrayal of trust. It is important to know that not all victims experience the difficulties identified above—family support and strong peer relationships are important in buffering the impacts (Cashmore & Shackel 2013).

Children face may barriers to disclosing child sexual assault. Often the perpetrator is someone the child and other family members trust and it can also be someone who is related to or cares for the child. Perpetrators of child sexual assault will commonly force compliance and coerce the child into engaging in sexual activity through the use of non-sexual touch followed by progressively more intrusive acts over a period of time. Tricks, bribes, promises and threats are often used by offenders to manipulate children into keeping ‘the secret’.

In some cases, child sexual assault happens in the context of severe systematic abuse over a long period of time. Unfortunately there are some children who are abused by a number of perpetrators and sometimes these perpetrators can be both male and female. In situations where systematic abuse is happening to a child or children, the abuse may take place at specific times, at particular events, within an institutional structure and may be based on a belief system which is used by the perpetrators to justify the behaviour.

Systematic abuse may not only involve multiple forms of sexual abuse, it may also involve neglect and other forms of abuse, such as physical, emotional and psychological abuse and the abuse which may take place in an organised context. Sometimes organised sexual assault may occur in what is known as a ‘paedophile ring’ or in other groups. These groups can be local, national or internationally based. Children who have been subjected to systematic or organised abuse need support as soon as individuals or services become aware of the abuse, which may or may not come from the child’s own disclosure. If you suspect a child is being subjected to organised abuse or any other type of abuse or neglect, it is important you report your concern as soon as possible so the concerns can be investigated. Please contact police or Care and Protection on the numbers listed at the back of this booklet. You can also phone CRCC and we can assist you to make the report or make the report on your behalf.

Children who disclose being sexually abused have often overcome many barriers to make their disclosure, and it is important that they are responded to appropriately, that their safety is prioritised and that they get support as soon as possible. With support, children who have been sexually abused can heal from their experiences. Here at the CRCC, we have supported many of children and non-offending parents, and through support children can process their experiences and achieve better outcomes.
Responding to a child’s disclosure
If a child tells you they have experienced any form of sexual abuse, it is important that you believe them and respond in a caring, supportive and protective way. It is important you do not make any promises that you cannot keep, such as telling the child that you won’t tell anyone else what they have told you. Being calm and containing your emotions can reassure the child and enable them to continue with their disclosure or unfolding disclosures which may take place over the following days, weeks or months. It is also important that you allow the child to speak as much or as little about what has happened in their own way in their own time. Asking probing questions can be interpreted by the child as disbelief and may interfere with legal processes. The most valuable things you can do are to support and listen to the child.

It is important to keep in mind that when adults respond with shock or in an overly-emotional way to a child’s disclosure, including expressing anger towards the perpetrator, the child can misunderstand the emotions and feel they have done something wrong. Children can often be protective of adults and try not to say or do things which will upset them. Also, it is not uncommon for a child to feel ambivalent about the perpetrator, whilst they did not like the abuse, there may be some things they did like about the perpetrator or what they did together.

If you have responded in a supportive way in front of a child when they disclosed sexual abuse, it’s not too hard on yourself. It is normal to feel horrified, shocked and upset to hear of children experiencing sexual assault, let alone your own child or a child you know, and the impact of your response can be repaired with time. Keep in mind that it will usually take some time before a child feels comfortable to speak about the abuse again if the first reaction they received was a particularly emotional one. If you have responded emotionally to a disclosure, you can speak with the child again at a later stage when you have had time to talk things through with someone trusted and are feeling calmer. You can express in your own words to the child how brave you feel they were to tell you what happened, that you didn’t mean to respond the way you did, and that you are so happy they told you because you can help them to be safe. Letting a child know that they can talk to you when they need to about what has happened can create safety and opportunities for healing. It can be incredibly difficult to hear a child’s disclosures, so it is important to remember that you should also get support.

If you suspect a child is being abused
If you suspect a child has been sexually assaulted it is important that you act on your concern. You can contact Care and Protection, the Police, CRCC or CARHU on the numbers listed in the contacts section of this booklet. It is important to note that in the A.C.T. most professional staff, including those who work for hospitals, government and non-government services are mandated by law to report known or suspected abuse and neglect of children.

Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse
The long term impacts of sexual abuse on a child are as varied and different as people are. Many adult survivors have carried a secret of their abuse for years and even decades. Some may never seek help, and others only begin the address the impact when they are in their 30s, 40s, 50s and older. If you are an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse, it is important that you know it is your right to access support and we have counsellor / advocates here at the CRCC who can offer you the support you need and deserve.

As an adult survivor, you may have found that over the years, you have had difficulties trusting people due to the betrayal of your trust as a child; you may have experienced relationship problems or found yourself living in an abusive relationship. Perhaps you have had low self-esteem since you were a child, sought isolation from certain people and places or limited your personal relationships for fear of being hurt again.
Some adult survivors find they experience intrusive memories or flashbacks and other psychological, emotional and physical impacts and effects. It is also common for survivors to develop coping strategies that helped with surviving the abuse at the time, but that are not helpful in adulthood. These are some of the things which can be important to address with support and counselling.

It is important to remember it is never too late to ask for help, and many survivors are able to reclaim their life even after decades of keeping the sexual abuse a secret. At the CRCC we do not have a time limit on when you can access support. If you are an adult survivor and are struggling with the impacts of sexual abuse, we encourage you to contact our service for support.

Older women
Many of the other challenges, impacts and effects faced by survivors of sexual assault and abuse are also faced by older women. In addition to these, many women do not come forward about a history of sexual abuse until they are in their senior years. There can be lots of reasons why older women who have experienced child sexual abuse come forward to seek counselling for the first time or to re-engage with counselling again when they are older. Some of these women have only come forward now as they have only just started to feel they can talk about what happened to them, counselling and support may not have been available to them at the time of the abuse or they may have spent their lifetime focusing on family, work or other pursuits and did not have time to focus on themselves. Many older people are on some type of pension and financial concerns can prevent people from accessing help and support. At the CRCC we provide free, confidential services and can work with older people in addressing any barriers which make it difficult to access support.

Whilst it is often not recognised by broader society, sexual assault can also happen to older women by their partner, family, relatives, people they are living with, people they know or strangers. If you are an older woman who has been sexually assaulted, you may feel a sense of shame coming forward at this later age. It is important to know that the need for support can arise at any age and it is never too late to seek support. At the CRCC we recognise how difficult it can be to come forward and if you contact us, we will do everything we can to support you in accessing counselling and advocacy services and work with you to ensure your safety.

As an older person, if you have been sexually assaulted by someone who is providing you with services or other things you need such as maintenance, meals, personal care or assistance with activities of daily living, it can be difficult to speak out against them for fear of losing the support or services. It is important that you know, that no matter what services a person provides you with, regardless of whether they are related to you, someone you know or someone you do not know, sexual assault is never acceptable and you should not have to endure any kind of abuse.

You might be concerned about others finding out about what has happened or worry that you will be forced to report to police. At the CRCC we respect people’s right to make their own decisions and we will support you in the decisions you wish to make including your choice of whether you would like to report or not report. The information you give us is kept only within our agency and only passed on to others with your written consent unless we are concerned about risk of abuse or neglect of a child or we are concerned about risk to yourself. In each of these situations, we would normally work with you to pass on the information so that any vulnerable person can also be supported to be safe. If you have any questions or concerns about our confidentiality, you can speak with us and we can give you some more information. It is important that you know that counsellors at the CRCC will respect what you rights to disclose or withhold information and you will never be forced to do anything you do not want to do.

If physical mobility is difficult or you are living in a nursing home you may not be able to get out into the community very often and may feel that you are unable to access services or supports. You have rights to access safe services, and have workers respect you, your body and your choices. You can contact the CRCC crisis line and speak with a counsellor about your concerns and if transport is a problem, we can discuss some options with you. Remember, no matter what your age is, sexual assault is never acceptable and it is never too late to ask for help.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Sexual assault within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia is disproportionately high. Sexual assault against children, young people, women and men is not acceptable in any circumstances in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and harms the individuals themselves as well as having impacts on the community. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced sexual assault feel significant shame about what has happened and there are many barriers to coming forward. There are strong members of the community who are lifting the silence and speaking out about sexual assault. In 2012, Paula McGrady-Swan from the Nguru Program of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, interviewed key members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Canberra, and many shared their personal stories and journeys which were produced into a number of resources (see below). Some of the comments made by these community members included:

A grandmother:
“Always listen to your gut feelings”
“Take the shame away, shame job does not belong here”
“We need more openness about rape and to talk about it with our kids”

A mother:
“I didn’t know that the majority of the perpetrators were known to the victim”
“I was sexually assaulted when I was 14… The sexual assault police and court support at that time were supportive which helped me go through with charging the perpetrator. I didn’t know before this had happened to me that there were special cops who deal with sexual assault and they helped me through all of it. They gave me unconditional support”
“I want the silence to change in our community, if we don’t say anything, then the person does it again”

A father:
“Sexual assault does not discriminate, whether you’re black, white or brindle. It happens in our community”
“Our silence is protecting the perpetrator and not the victim. Speak out, you’re not alone.”

To all the men in our community: “Be a man and speak up about violence”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access support through the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) through the generalist service or through the Nguru Program which is part of CRCC. Nguru provides culturally appropriate counselling for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who have experienced sexual assault, and their families. Nguru aims to help clients assess their circumstances and relationships, and to make choices, decisions and plans for the future. The Nguru contact details are listed in the contacts section at the back of this booklet.

Nguru resources which you can get from the CRCC:

- Nguru (2012). Nguru’s Gecko Activity Book: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.
- Nguru (2012). Ngattai Dhunial: Lets Listen and Talk: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are victims of sexual assault, and their supporters, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.
- Nguru (2012). Keep Me Safe and Stop the Shame: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are victims of sexual assault, and their supporters, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.
survivor seeks assistance from services or wishes to engage in criminal justice processes, they may feel concerned about whether they will be believed or taken seriously.

Trauma effects of sexual violence can be magnified for those dealing with the stress of a heterosexist society. People with diverse sexualities, particularly those in the transgendered community, may go through periods of depression or suicidal thoughts regardless of any additional trauma. The impact of sexual assault on an individual can trigger or exacerbate these thoughts and effect coping responses, so it is important to get support.

At CRCC we are client-centred and aim to have a service free from discrimination. We are also aware of the challenges that discrimination in the broader community can place on people with diverse sexualities and we are able to help you by advocating for your rights in other services or with the police and hospitals if you need it. It is important to remember that you deserve support and that you do not have to face the challenges alone. Here at the CRCC, we can support you on the crisis line and through face to face counselling and advocacy. Please contact us if you would like support, our details are in the contact section at the end of this booklet.
People with a disability
People with intellectual, psychiatric or physical disabilities can experience significant social disadvantage. Unfortunately, the prevalence of sexual assault and abuse against people with disabilities is disproportionately high. Some people with a disability are sexually assaulted by those who are meant to care for them, or by those who belong to an organisation providing a service. It can be incredibly difficult speaking out against the assault, especially if the perpetrator provides a service that is needed. If you are someone with a disability, the perpetrator may have said things which make you feel you were sexually assaulted because you have a disability and/ or are responsible for the abuse. You may also feel you have or will have less control over your life, or will lose control and independence if family members, carers or friends find out. The perpetrator may have threatened you to try and stop you from telling anybody about what happened, they may have said that nobody would believe you if you told them what had happened. It is important to know that people will believe you if you can find the courage to speak out about what happened. Nobody ever asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted and if you talk to someone at the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, we will do everything we can to support your safety and stop the abuse from happening. It is also important to know that the abuse did not happen because you have a disability, it happened because the perpetrator chose not to respect you, your body and your rights. You are never responsible for any sexual assault or any other abuse that happens to you.

People with disabilities have the same rights to advocacy and support as everyone else in the community. At CRCC we understand some of the difficulties which you may be dealing with, and we encourage you to access help and support, not matter what situation you are in, and we will respect your rights and wishes. We have trained counsellors who can provide you with counselling, advocacy if you decide to speak with police and offer help with accessing information and further support. Advocacy for Inclusion is another agency in Canberra which provides advocacy and support for people living with a disability, their contact details are at the end of this booklet.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
Sexual assault and rape are universal and occur in all cultures and nations, regardless of whether or not there is a word for it in the language or laws against it in a person’s country of origin. In Australia, sexual assault and also female genital mutilation are illegal and can result in the perpetrators being criminally convicted. Regardless of cultural background, nationality, or amount of English a person understands or speaks, being sexually assaulted is a crime in Australia and nobody should have to accept it. Unfortunately some people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are subjected to sexual assault within marriage and may be told by their partner, family, friends and the community that it is acceptable. Unfortunately Sexual assault is never acceptable in any circumstances and a person who sexually assaults or abuses another person - regardless of whether it happens in the context of marriage – can be prosecuted under the law in Australia.

Perpetrators of sexually assault will often use all kinds of excuses for their actions and may hide behind their culture as an excuse. Many communities struggle with the idea of sexual assault, and find it easier to say it doesn’t happen, or that the person affected should just try not to think about it. It may be difficult finding someone in your community to help and support you. You may have fear that if you speak out, you will lose friends and family because of it. Sexual assault is traumatic, and you have the right to ask for help and you have the right to feel safe.

Sexual assault is also a known tactic in war and is often used systematically to cause devastation in communities and to display power. The impact of war and sexual assault can have long term impacts on a survivor’s recovery and for refugees, may make adjusting to Australia even more challenging than what it would otherwise be. If you are a survivor of sexual assault in war, you can have counselling with us here at the CRCC and also access support through Companion House, which is an agency in Canberra that offers support to victims of torture and trauma (see contact list at the back of this booklet).
It is important that you know that you can get support, at CRCC we will respect your privacy, and our counsellors work with culturally sensitive practice, which means we respect your culture and your perspective and will work to find a process that suits you and is appropriate. You can also have access to an interpreter, and have the right to request the gender of that person, as well as decline the interpreter who arrives. You do not have to do anything you do not want to do.

1 in 6 boys experience sexual assault

Male survivors

The sexual assault of men and boys is under-acknowledged in our society, even though prevalence rates indicate that 1 in 6 boys experience sexual assault before they are adults and 1 in 20 males are sexually assaulted over the age of 15. Male survivors of sexual assault often experience significant levels of shame which often leads them to either not seek support for themselves or alternatively seek support many years or decades after the incidents took place. It can be overwhelmingly difficult for a man to ask for help because of cultural expectations and the myths which are prevalent, such as fear of ridicule, concerns about sexuality, and concerns about status in the community. Society does not expect men to be victims. This fear and concern can prevent many from seeking counselling, or may make it difficult for men to find appropriate counselling. The CRCC encourages male survivors of child sexual assault and males who have experienced rape as an adult to access support and counselling services. Here at the Centre, we have a specific program for our male clients:

The service assisting male survivors of sexual assault (SAMSSA)

SAMSSA provides counselling specifically for males. They have both male and female counsellors who are all trained in working with victims of trauma and working with men. If you want to seek help or to know more about what you can do, you can contact SAMSSA or the CRCC crisis line (see details in contact list at the end of this booklet)

SAMSSA and the CRCC also distribute two booklets produced by the Education Centre Against Violence which are specifically for male survivors:

- Who Can a Man Tell? Information for Men who were Sexually Assaulted as Children.
- When a Man is Raped: A Survival Guide, Information for Men who have been Raped, Parents, Partners, Spouses and Friends.
- As well as a booklet produced by Living Well, an initiative of Spiritus Counselling and Education Services, which covers information for men to assist recovery from sexual assault:
  - Living Well: A Guide for Men
Living well also has an excellent website with information and support for male survivors of sexual assault, which can be found at: www.livingwell.org.au

You are welcome to request a copy of any of these booklets from CRCC or SAMSSA.

Myth | Reality
---|---
Only males who are gay are raped | Both heterosexual and homosexual men are raped and statistics show that victims are more likely to be straight than gay. Sexual preference is not generally relevant, except perhaps where the victim is the target of an attack motivated by homophobia.
Males who are sexually assaulted by males turn gay | Being raped does not change a person’s sexual preference.
A strong man can’t be raped. He must have consented. | In fact being strong is no defence against rape and just because a man did not fight off his attacker does not mean he consented. Surprise, a weapon, threats, being outnumbered or frozen by fear, make fighting back impossible for most victims. Any man can be raped when his attacker, for whatever reason, has more power.

My friend or family member has been sexually assaulted, what can I do?

If someone chooses to tell you that they have been assaulted then they are investing a lot of trust in you. Your reactions are important, you can be just as pivotal in the survivor’s recovery as any professional. The attitudes and responses of those closest to a person who has been assaulted have the capacity to either extend the crisis, or to help them deal with it.

It can be very difficult coping with the sexual assault of someone close to you. You may be feeling a range of emotions, including shock, confusion, disbelief, guilt or anger. You may feel helpless, and not know what to do. Feelings of anger towards the survivor or the desire for revenge are normal; however they are not helpful for your loved one to hear or to have you act on. Try to be aware of your feelings and how they might impact. It is important that you get the support you need to talk through your feelings, whether this is a trusted friend or a counsellor.

Sexual assault is about a perpetrator taking power away from the person they are offending against. A person who has been sexually assaulted often feels powerless, a loss of control and they may experience
fear during the offence that they were going to die. Letting the survivor make decisions about their recovery could be amongst the most important steps on their road to recovery. It is important, therefore, that the survivor is given the time and space to make their own choices about what to do to regain some control. It is important that you respect their decisions, even if they go against what you believe to be right, or what you want to happen. It is important that the survivor decides who they will tell about the sexual assault(s), and that you don’t tell others about that which happened without the survivor’s consent. To tell others may cause the survivor to feel a further sense of powerlessness. A survivor may also feel embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated, guilty, mistrustful, angry or revengeful. Their moods may fluctuate and they may say or do things that are out of character. All of these emotions are normal reactions to sexual assault. You can support their anger and rage when directed outwards in non-destructive ways. If you express discomfort with these emotions and discourage them from expressing them, they may be directed inwards and become destructive and harmful.

Sexual assault is always the responsibility of those who commit it, and it is important that you do not blame the survivor for the criminal offence committed against them. Regardless of whether the person close to you fought or cooperated with the offender, they made the best decision they could at the time to survive the offence(s).

Some family and friends of survivors do things to try and protect their loved one following the offences. Whilst safety is important, it is important you don’t overprotect the survivor, as this may be taking away control from them, they need to regain control of their life. The survivor needs support to make their own decisions, it is their needs that need to be met and you can let them know you are there if they need you, but allow them to ask for help as they need it.

When supporting your family member or friend, it is unhelpful for them if you ask probing questions about the sexual aspects of the offence. Sexual assault is not about sex, it is a criminal offence in which sex was used to overpower and control the survivor. It is helpful to ask her what things concern them the most. In your communications with the survivor, be natural and let them know you are willing to listen if they want to talk. Many survivors find it difficult to speak to those closest to them due to their feelings of shame and embarrassment; you can support the survivor by encouraging them to speak with a counsellor.

A person who has been assaulted needs to be believed, to be listened to, and to be allowed time and space to recover from their experience. As someone close to the survivor, it is important that you do not send any message to them, whether it be verbal or non-verbal, that communicates in any way that it is not okay to discuss the sexual assault (for example, saying “it’s best if you don’t think about it”, changing the topic of conversation or making a facial expression indicating you don’t want to talk about it.

Whilst survivors often want to forget that the assault ever took place, it is not helpful if you make them think they have to push it aside, as this means they are being shut down and this may extend their process of recovery. Try not to avoid the subject, get the support you need so you can be emotionally available for you friend or family member when they need you. Encourage the survivor to express their feelings, but also be mindful that there will be times they do not wish to speak about their thoughts or feelings, and it is important that you respect their right to privacy. Try also to act in the normal ways you always have, for a survivor, regaining a sense of normality is important, and you can play a role in this.

The CRCC supports family and friends of survivors, you are welcome to contact CRCC, the contact details are listed in the contact section of this booklet.

**My partner has been sexually assaulted, what can I do?**

If it is your partner who has been sexually assaulted, you are likely to be feeling a range of intense emotions and all of the information and suggestions noted above are also relevant to you (see section: My friend, family member has been sexually assaulted, what can I do?). In addition to this, showing affection can be important as it can express that you care. If you have been relating in sexual ways in your relationship, it may be best to show affection in non-sexual forms of touching, and wait for your partner to indicate they are comfortable with being sexual again.

Many survivors feel they do not want to be sexual for a period of time after they have been sexually assaulted. It is important that you respect this need for your partner to not be sexual for some time, their body, mind and emotions need time to recover and your support in allowing this time is important for your partner’s healing. If you are struggling with what has happened to your loved one, or want some support or advice, you are welcome to access services at the CRCC. This includes use of the crisis line, and counselling services.
Many victims/survivors of sexual assault go through their lives without ever accessing support. They can struggle for many years, decades or even a lifetime with a range of impacts by themselves, and not know that support is available or feel too fearful to trust anyone with the knowledge of their experience. It can difficult for people to reach out and ask for help, it takes courage and strength to make a phone call or send an email to a service or someone a survivor feels is trustworthy and will understand.

If you have not accessed support and are finding yourself struggling with any of the impacts and effects of sexual assault or abuse, please remember that you deserve support; you do not have to struggle alone. We encourage you to pick up a phone and give us a call or send us an email (see Contact List) and we can talk to you about what we can offer you and answer any questions you have which may assist you in taking the next steps in accepting some further support.

Getting help

Many victims/survivors of sexual assault go through their lives without ever accessing support. They can struggle for many years, decades or even a lifetime with a range of impacts by themselves, and not know that support is available or feel too fearful to trust anyone with the knowledge of their experience. It can difficult for people to reach out and ask for help, it takes courage and strength to make a phone call or send an email to a service or someone a survivor feels is trustworthy and will understand.

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What can I expect from counselling?

Many people who seek counselling are unsure at first about their rights in counselling. When engaging in counselling, your counsellor should provide you with enough information to know what to expect from counselling. Your counsellor should be upfront about confidentiality and any limits to confidentiality – for example concerns about risks to yourself or risks to children. You should expect that your counsellor will treat you with care and consideration, listen to your story and not underestimate the impact the trauma has had on you.

Counsellors should also respect your strengths and help you to identify and develop them, provide you with a physically and emotionally safe environment, respect your sexuality, cultural and religious background, class, age, opinions and choices, and respect your decisions and needs. Whilst there are many commonalities in the impacts and effects of sexual assault experienced by survivors, each survivor is unique with individual circumstanes and your counsellor should take this into account, as well as the goals you want to work on in counselling.

In counselling, you may wish to talk about the emotional, psychological and social impacts which you have experienced as a result of the sexual assault or abuse. Because sexual assault and abuse is a violation of trust, it can take time to develop trust with others, including your counsellor, and it is important that you allow yourself time to develop the counselling relationship. When you are ready, you may wish to speak with your counsellor about the feelings you hold towards the perpetrator, family, friends and others who may or may not have supported you, memories about the sexual assault or abuse and the feelings you have felt about it.

Other common issues which other survivors have discussed and worked through with their counsellor have included relationship issues, feelings towards those who could have acted protectively but did not, concerns about body image, feelings about sex and sexuality, alienation, feelings of self-blame, difficulties in trusting oneself and/or others and issues about parenting. Counselling should also encourage you to engage in self-care activities and support you in developing skills and strategies to managing the trauma impacts you may be experiencing, such as triggering, flashbacks or sleep disturbance. It is important you know that it is your choice to have counselling, and you have the right to stop at any time.

If your counsellor does something you do not agree with, or you feel they are not the right person for you, you can always make a complaint, ask for a new counsellor or ask for a referral. If you would like to access counselling, you are welcome to contact us.
Looking after yourself

Reclaiming back power and self-determination is important for recovery and healing after sexual assault or abuse. Regardless of where you are in your healing process, there are a variety things you can do to take back some power, and a good way of doing this is to look after yourself. Self-care is important, and in addition to accessing support for yourself and having any medical needs attended to, we encourage you to take some time out to do some things you enjoy and things you are good at.

Keeping in touch with and spending time with friends and loved ones, whether it is face to face, over the phone, via email or though Facebook, Twitter or other electronic means, can help with staying connected and is a good way of looking after yourself.

Canberra rape crisis centre counselling and support

Here at CRCC, our counselling services are free of charge, and we can offer victims/survivors with support and advocacy and also provide support to non-offending parents of children who have been sexually assaulted and others supporting victims/survivors.

We are client centred, work within a trauma model framework and can provide support to survivors regardless of how long ago their experiences of sexual assault or abuse occurred. We are also confidential – except in instances where there is risk of harm which we can discuss with you further – and workers are trained in counselling and supporting survivors of sexual assault and abuse. You can access our crisis line which operates between 7.00am and 11.00pm, 7 days a week, and is staffed by female crisis counsellors.

We can support you in making statements to police and attending the Forensic Medical Sexual Assault Care (FAMSAC) service. We can provide advocacy for clients through criminal justice proceedings, and through systems advocacy such as with the Department of Housing where the assault took place in the home or the offender knows the victim/survivor’s location. We can also provide referrals to private practitioners and other services which may assist you in your recovery process. If you would like to know more, or would like some help, please speak with or write to us through the contact details listed at the end of this booklet.

Here are a few words from some clients about counselling:

Survivor of child sexual assault

“My counsellor pushed me in the right direction…she showed me it was okay and I’d get there and that it’s okay to trust. I didn’t have to let her in the whole way, just enough to get to know her and not shut you out. I couldn’t get as far as I have without her support. It was her understanding of the situation. She let me be me and let me take things where I wanted to go. She never forced me to talk about anything, it was always my choice.”

Young person

“Counselling has helped my family and other people, like my teacher, understand why some things at home and school are so hard for me at times…”

Parent of a young person

“My daughter would not still be alive without the support of the Rape Crisis Centre. Apart from counselling, she regularly called the Crisis line which was an invaluable resource”
There are also some simple things you can do at home to take care of yourself. You could watch some of your favourite or new movies or television series, read a good book, listen to your favourite music. You could do some cooking or bake something delicious. You might like to take a long bath, shower or footbath or spend time doing your nails, hair or choose clothing which makes you feel good about yourself.

Looking after your body and connecting with it can be a powerful way of taking back some control. Doing some exercise such as walking, running, going to the gym, bike riding or even doing some stretches at home can all be good ways to spend time with yourself and connect in positive ways with your body. On the other hand, you may prefer to do some exercise with someone you trust, or even consider trying something new, like joining a cycling or walking club, or doing something a bit different such as rollerderby, dragonboating or other team sport. Regular exercise is not only healthy for your body, but it can assist with reducing sleep disturbance and is also good for your psychological wellbeing.

Spending time outdoors can be another good way to take some time out for yourself. You might like to observe nature, the flowers, plants and insects in your or other people’s gardens, take note of the weather, plant a tree or do some gardening or go on a walk somewhere such as one of the lakes in Canberra and observe the birds and other wildlife.

Laughter is also a great thing to do to take care of yourself. If there is a comedian who you enjoy or a movie you find funny, take the time out to watch or listen to the person or thing which will bring you some laughter and a smile to your face.

Be creative! There are so many ways to express yourself. Sing your favourite songs or make one up! Dance around your house, draw something, do some craft, do some knitting, play an instrument, learn something new.

Some survivors find writing is a powerful way to express their thoughts, feelings and insights. Have you thought about keeping a journal where you can write about your frustrations, your anger, your sadness, your fears and all the other emotions you are experiencing as well as your goals and hopes? Writing about your journey can be very therapeutic.

Some survivors keep a notebook or visual diary and paste pictures such as cut-outs from magazines, draw pictures or write poetry in it. Journaling can be a safe way of expressing yourself and you might like to consider finding a special and private place to keep your journal when you are not using it.

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Keep in mind that it is normal to have times that you feel okay and times that you do not. It is normal to have days where you think you can face what has happened and days you feel like you cannot get through another moment. Recovery from sexual assault trauma is about helping you to get your life back to a place where you feel like you are in control of you. Beginning to do some self-care is a good place to start, even if it means that you do one thing for a few minutes and build on it on the good days.
There are many people who decide not to report to police for a range of reasons, not least because it can be very difficult to come forward and talk about what has happened, particularly when the person who committed the offence is someone who is known. It is important to know however, that it is a person’s right to report any experience of sexual assault to police if and when they are ready, and they can have support from a trusted friend, family member or another support person, such as a counsellor/advocate from the CRCC.

Police who investigate sexual offences
In the A.C.T. there are special police detectives in the A.F.P Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team (SACAT) who are specially trained in taking statements from and understanding the specific issues faced by victims of sexual assault and child abuse. SACAT officers investigate all sexual offences against children in the A.C.T. which are reported to police. They also investigate sexual assaults and a range of other sexual offences against adults, particularly those which carry the heaviest penalties upon conviction. There are, however, a number of sexual offences - such as acts of indecency - which are often investigated by General Duties Police.

Meet and greet with the police
If you have experienced any form of sexual assault in the A.C.T and you are considering making a report but are unsure, you can meet with police to discuss the reporting process before deciding on whether you would like to proceed with making a formal statement. You can have support from someone at this meeting, if you wish; a counsellor from the CRCC can offer support and advocacy and help explain the processes during your meeting.

Making a police statement
Some people who make a report to police do so within a few hours or days of experiencing sexual assault and others report weeks, months or years after the event(s). There is no statute of limitations in the A.C.T regarding sexual offences, which means it does not matter how long ago a sexual assault took place, it can still be reported to police.

During a police statement, victims will be asked to describe in as much detail as possible what happened to them, including information about the person who sexually assaulted them, anything the perpetrator said at the time of the incident(s) and when and where the incident(s) took place. Police questions are designed to obtain as much information from you as possible at the time so no important details are left out, and the need for supplementary statements is minimised.

The police will also require sufficient details to help establish the nature of the incidents and the number of charges. It is important that victims tell the police in their own words as much about the events leading up to and surrounding the incident(s) as well as the fine detail of the actual incident(s). Even details which might seem unimportant at the time may in fact be important in the investigation.
Talking about what happened in detail can be a difficult experience, if you are considering making a statement, it is important you know that unless you would prefer to make the statement alone, you have the option of having a support person there with you, someone who believes you and is aware of your feelings and needs. As part of CRCC’s memorandum of understanding with police, a CRCC counsellor/advocate will be contacted to offer support to all victims of sexual assault before, during and after they make a statement, unless the victim prefers to make the statement without CRCC support.

As a victim of crime, it is important you know that you are not responsible for the offences perpetrated against you and you have the right to phone someone for support, leave the premises at any time and if you need to, you are able to take breaks during the statement. You are also able to take an extended break and complete the statement later in the day, the following day or some time thereafter if you are unable to complete it at the time.

Making an informal report
Some people do not wish to make a formal statement to police as they do not wish to engage with any court proceedings, but would still like to report what has happened to them so the incident(s) can be recorded by police. Whilst police do not investigate informal reports, the information provided to them may be used for police intelligence purposes. Making an informal report does not mean that a person is unable to make a formal statement at a later date.

The investigation
The formal statement provided to police will be used to inform the police investigation. Depending on how long ago the incident took place, the police may attend the location where the offence(s) took place to collect evidence. They may also take statements from any witnesses or others who may have information pertinent to the case. In some cases, police seek to obtain additional evidence which may include documents, telecommunications records, closed-circuit television footage or other evidence that is available and relevant to their investigations. The investigation may take several weeks or months depending on the amount of evidence and difficulty in collecting it.

People who make contact with SACAT will be provided with the contact details of the investigating officer(s) and the police Victim Liaison Service. Victims are welcome to contact one of the Victim Liaison Officers or police officers if they have questions regarding police processes relevant to their case.

The brief of evidence and Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)
The police will compile a brief of evidence including the victim’s statement, the statements provided by any other witnesses and other important information obtained during their investigation. This brief of evidence is reviewed, and the police will liaise with the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and determine whether there is enough evidence to proceed with a prosecution.

When there is not enough evidence
In those instances where it is deemed there is insufficient evidence to proceed with court, it is important that you get support to process the impact of this news. Just because it is not able to proceed does not mean that people do not believe that you were sexually assaulted. Unfortunately there are many cases where there simply was not enough information to lead to a successful prosecution so the case is unable to proceed.

1 in 5 women & 1 in 20 men experience some form of sexual harassment in the workplace

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Criminal proceedings
In sexual assault trials in the A.C.T., a person’s police statement is used as the ‘evidence in chief’. This means that the written or recorded (and transcribed) statement given to the police is used as the main evidence from the victim and it is used in criminal proceedings as the basis for cross-examination. There can be a substantial wait – one year or more - between the time of giving the statement and when criminal proceedings take place. There are usually a number of court proceedings, such as case management hearings which take place in relation to the case which victims are not required to attend. In the A.C.T sexual offences are often heard first in the Magistrates Court via a committal hearing. Whilst victims can be called upon to attend the committal hearing, generally they take place as ‘paper committals’, in which the police brief of evidence is presented without the need for the victim (primary witness) to attend.

Support during criminal proceedings
It is important to know that any person who has experienced sexual assault can have support before, during and after court proceedings. A counselor from the CRCC can offer support to you if you would like.

Before the trial
Victims are given a copy of their police statement to read through and re-familiarise themselves with prior to the criminal trial. A copy of the statement is also provided to the defendant’s lawyer in preparation for criminal proceedings. Victims will also meet with a Prosecutor at the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) who is prosecuting the case in the courts. The Prosecutor is a specially trained legal representative who acts on behalf of the State to bring the victims evidence to court. This meeting will often take place within two or three weeks leading up to the criminal trial.

During this time, you can also look at the court facilities to familiarise yourself with them, usually a DPP Witness Assistant is available to show you the room, or a room that is similar to the one you will give evidence in.

Defendant’s plea
If the person who sexually assaulted you (called the ‘defendant’ or ‘accused person’) pleads guilty before or after the committal hearing. They can be sentenced by the Magistrate without the case proceeding to trial. If the defendant does not plead guilty, the case will generally be committed to trial at a later date.

Pre-recorded hearings
In the A.C.T. special provisions have been put into place for certain vulnerable witnesses, such as children and those with an intellectual disability, whereby their evidence can be given and cross-examination undertaken in a pre-recorded hearing which takes place sooner than the trial. Pre-recording hearings are equivalent to a trial, except that no jury is present and no verdict is reached at this time. The evidence from a pre-recorded hearing is re-played at a later date to a jury and a verdict reached.

The trial
Sexual assault trials in the A.C.T. take place in the Supreme Court, and during trials, victims are protected from seeing the ‘defendant’ through a remote witness facility which is in a location away from the court. The remote facility has a monitor to see the courtroom, a microphone to speak through and a camera so the victim’s image can be seen by those in the courtroom. On the monitor, the victim will be able to see the judge, judge’s associate, the DPP prosecutor and the defence lawyer in the courtroom. The camera in the court-room is adjusted so the victim does not have to see the ‘defendant’ during the proceedings. The DPP can also apply for a closed court – whereby general members of the public are unable to attend the proceedings – and the Judge will use his or her discretion to determine the outcome of the application.
Giving evidence and cross-examination

As the chief witness, you will be called upon to give evidence. This first involves reading an oath of affirmation that says what you will say is true, and you will be asked a few questions such as your name and sometimes other details such as your date of birth and occupation. You have a right not to give your address. In any media reports regarding what offences took place, your name will be suppressed, and if naming the defendant would reveal your identity, their name will also be suppressed.

If you made a recorded statement to police on video, usually this will be played to the Judge and Jury. Then the prosecutor will ask you questions so you do not leave out any important details, followed by the defence lawyer, who can ask you questions about the information in your statement or matters which have not yet been raised. Following this, the prosecutor can ask you any additional questions if there is anything he or she thinks is important to help clarify any information you have provided.

Survivors of sexual assault usually find going to trial difficult, particularly the cross-examination. There are some tips which you can keep in mind which may help you in responding to questions in court:

- Consider each question;
- Take your time to answer;
- If you don’t understand the question, you can say so or ask for the question to be repeated;
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, you can say so;
- Only answer the question;
- If you become distressed, you can ask for a break;
- Speak clearly;
- Don’t go into unnecessary explanation;
- Remember to keep breathing.

(Justice and Community Safety Directorate, 2013a)

Counsellors at the CRCC are able to explain more about the court process, offer support in preparing for court and accompany you to court if you would like support during the proceedings, or if you prefer, offer a referral for support with another agency. Having support can help make the process less intimidating.

The outcome (verdict)

After hearing all of the evidence, the Jury (or Judge in a Judge-only trial) will make a determination regarding the charges, and if the defendant is found guilty on any of the charges, a date will be set for Sentencing. If the perpetrator has been found guilty, the victim can ask the court to consider compensation as part of the sentencing process. The presiding Judge or Magistrate will make a determination in this regard. Victims can speak with their police case officer to make an application for compensation before the sentencing.

Before the sentencing, the defence can request reports relating to the defendant, such as psychological reports. The DPP can tender a document called the Victim Impact Statement which is written by the victim and outlines the effects they have experienced resulting from the offence(s).

If the defendant is acquitted this does not mean that the offences did not take place.
Victim registers

Victims of sexual assault can provide their contact details to the relevant victim’s register to obtain administrative information regarding the offender who was sentenced for the crimes committed against the victim. There are two victims’ registers, one for victims of adult offenders and one for victims of juvenile offenders and they are overseen by AC Corrective Services.

Through the victims’ register, where the offender is serving a prison sentence, their victim(s) can receive details regarding the offender, including:

- The length of the sentence, the offender’s parole eligibility date and the earliest release date;
- The correctional centre where the offender is detained and any transfer of the offender to another correctional facility;
- Any change in the offender’s security classification which may result in the offender being eligible for unescorted leave;
- Any unescorted leave given to the offender;
- The death, escape of or any other exceptional event relating to the offender.

Registered victims may also provide a written submission to the Sentence Administration Board when they are considering releasing the offender.

Financial assistance

Under the Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act 1983 victims of sexual assault are eligible to submit an application for financial assistance to take into account the impacts and effects the sexual offences have had on them. The criteria for an application are that the person has suffered a physical or mental injury as a result of a violent crime – which includes sexual offences, – that the offence(s) took place in the A.C.T and that the victim made a report to the police (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, 2013c). Applications can be submitted regardless of whether the offender was found guilty or not.

The legislation specifies that applications need to be submitted within 12 months of the offence(s) occurring, however, an application for an extension of time can be granted in instances where the person can provide a good reason for the application not having been made within 12 months. The scheme is based on a cost-recovery basis and application forms can be obtained from the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, people may approach a private lawyer and take legal action in a civil claim through common law.

Regardless of the outcome they got something out of the process.

Protection orders

If you are concerned that the person who assaulted you or someone they know may try to contact and/or harass you, you are able to apply for a Personal Protection Order (PPO) or Domestic Violence Order (DVO) through the Magistrates Court. You can attend the Magistrates court from Monday to Friday to apply for an order. Bail conditions can also cover similar restrictions for those offenders who have been found guilty. You can contact CRCC if you would like some more information about obtaining an Order or would like support in this process.

Regardless of the outcome they got something out of the process.
Looking forward
People can, and have, managed to rebuild their lives after sexual assault and abuse. Here at the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, we have supported many women, young people and children in rebuilding their lives after experiencing sexual assault trauma. If you want to take steps towards rebuilding your life and you are not sure where to start, please contact us at the CRCC, we can support you in finding a path forward.

A final note to complete this booklet, here are some words and comments which have been shared by some of the clients who have accessed support at the CRCC:

Elderly woman
“I cannot thank you enough for all the help you’ve given me, I’m so much stronger, calmer and happier”.

Adult survivor of child sexual abuse
“It took me a while to come to terms with what happened and that it wasn’t my fault. I blamed myself for years, too long, but I know now I’m not to blame”.

Young person
“I can do the things again that I used to love doing”.

Mother of a young child
“I was gutted when my little boy told me his uncle had…. I don’t know where we’d be without your help. I just wanted to thank you for everything you’ve done for [child’s name], he’s so much happier now since the play-therapy, he’s getting on with things and you would never know what he’s been through just seeing how he is now. Thanks so much”.

Adult woman
“I’ll never forget what he did to me, what he put me through for all those years, but I can tell you one thing for sure, I’m not letting what he did to me control my life anymore! I know who I am, I’ve struggled through so much, but I’m a fighter, a survivor and I will never give up”.

Male survivor
“I was so scared to tell anyone what happened to me back then. Felt like they would think I was a wimp, not a real man. Thankyou for helping me see that it took much more courage to get some help. I am way more in control of myself and my life by facing the thing that scared me the most”.

“All those years ago I thought there was no hope, I tried to end it a few times and didn’t look after myself, I don’t know how I survived. My life is different now, the strategies I learned helped me get back on track. I went back to school and studied hard and got my degree. If you had told me five years ago that I would have a loving partner and a healthy baby and my life ahead of me, I wouldn’t have believed it. I’ve got my life back, and things are only getting better”.

Beyond Sexual assault
CRCC services
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC)
Our Crisis Line: (02) 6247 2525
(7.00am-11.00pm, 7 days a week)
Business Line: (02) 6287 3618
(9.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday)
email: crcc@crcc.org.au
Website: http://crcc.org.au

Nguru: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support and Community Education Program
Crisis Line: (02) 6247 2525
(7.00am-11.00pm, 7 days a week)
Business Line: (02) 6287 3618
(9-5 Monday to Friday)
Email: nguru@crcc.org.au

Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault (SAMSSA)
Contact number: (02) 6287 3935
(Monday – Friday, 9am–5pm);
Website: http://samssa.org.au

The CRCC crisis line is also available for male survivors and their supporters.

Other services
24 Hour crisis support services
Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT: 6280 0900
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
Lifeline: 13 1 14
Act Mental Health Crisis Assessment & Treatment Team: 1800 629 354
Men’s Line: 1300 78 99 78
Veteran’s Line: 1800 011 046

Advocacy for Inclusion
Phone: (02) 6257 4005
Website: www.advocacyforinclusion.org/
Email: info@advocacyforinclusion.org

ACT Human Rights Commission
Phone: 1300 656 419
Complaints: complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au
Website: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/
sex-discrimination/guides/sexual-harassment

Child At Risk Health Unit (CARHU)
Phone: (02) 6244 2712

Companion House – Assisting Survivors of Torture and Trauma
Phone: (02) 6251 4550
Website: www.companionhouse.org.au
Email: info@companionhouse.org.au

Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care (FAMSAC)
(02) 6244 2184 (Monday–Friday 9.00am–5.00pm)
(02) 6244 2222 (afterhours)
sexual-health/forensic-and-medical-sexual-assault

Homelessness Services
Centralised intake service for all homelessness services within the ACT
First Point: 1800 176 468
(Monday to Friday 9–7pm: Saturday 10–1pm)
Website: http://firstpoint.org.au/

Office for Children Youth and Family Support (Care and Protection)
Urgent and non-urgent reporting: 1300 556 729

Police
Emergency: 000
Non-emergency: 131 444
Sexual Assault & Child Abuse Team: (02) 6256 7777

Victim Support ACT
Phone: 1800 822 272
Website: http://www.victimsupport.act.gov.au/

This contact list is not exhaustive, if you have been unable to find the services or supports you are looking for, please contact the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and we can assist you in finding additional support if.
References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996). Women’s Safety Australia, Catalogue Number 4128.0


ECAV (2000). Who Can a Man Tell? Information for Men who were Sexually Assaulted as Children, Education Centre Against Violence, Western Sydney Area Health Service, Parramatta.


Nguru (2012). Keep Me Safe and Stop the Shame: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are victims of sexual assault, and their supporters, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

Nguru (2012). Ngartali Dhunial: Lets Listen and Talk: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are victims of sexual assault, and their supporters, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

Nguru (2012). Nguru’s Gecko Activity Book: A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

A booklet for people who have experienced sexual assault and their supporters