



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



Annual Report

2022- 2023

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Vision

GCASA shares a vision for a world free from sexual assault, harm, and violence.

Purpose

To advocate, empower and support the Gippsland community to improve safety, equity, and quality of life by reducing the impact and incidence of sexual assault, trauma, and violence.

Values

RESPECT: Hold feelings, wishes and rights at the core of everything we do

EMPOWERMENT: Support choice, self-determination, resilience, and human rights

DIGNITY: Worthy of being treated in a safe, thoughtful, and respectful manner

INTEGRITY: Uncompromised commitment to accountability, rights, and ethics

Organisational Goals

Our clients are resilient, thriving and engaged.

Our people are professional and dedicated to GCASA's purpose.

Our services are dynamic, initiative-taking, and responsive.

Our organisation is inclusive, influential, and enduring.

GOVERNANCE & ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault Inc. is governed by a Board of Governance comprises of community members who are committed to the (GCASA) vision, who voluntarily commit their time, energy, knowledge, and skills to lead in an enthusiastic and dedicated way.

To this end, the GCASA Board actively reviews and refreshes priority areas of organisation governance, service planning and strategic priorities to reflect our organisational goals, accountability, and quality service provision. In addition to 11 Board meetings each year, the GCASA Board members are active in sub-committees, provided advice outside of meetings, participating in professional development and involving themselves in the life of the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) wherever possible.

A special thank you is extended to the external advisors who willingly share their time and expertise with us to support GCASA governance through their role on the Board of Governance. Jo Porter from Federation University Collaboration Unit and Susan Lloyd who has supported and guided GCASAs Governance Framework development. GCASA acknowledges the commitment and dedication of our Board Members, Val Prokopiv (Chair), Kaye Borgelt (Deputy Chair), Ric Sinclair, (Treasurer) and the work Jan McNally, Liam Bantock, Trent Kooyman, Danielle Lowe, and Yumna Ahmed who have tirelessly supported GCASA throughout the last 12 months. We welcomed Holly Perriam, Mel Cane, Geraldine Jones.

Pictured: Jane Barr (CEO) with long standing Board Member Jan McNally



Our Board Members 2022-23

Chair: Val Prokopiv

Deputy Chair: Kaye Borgelt

Treasurer: Mel Cane

Board Members:

Trent Kooyman
Yumna Ahmed
Danielle Bundell-Lowe
Geraldine Jones
Holly Perriam

Retired Board Members 2022-23

Treasurer: Ric Sinclair

Board Members:

Jan McNally
Liam Bantock
Trent Kooyman

GCASA would acknowledge the role of Jan McNally who has served as a member and Chair for many years. We appreciate the care, compassion and commitment Jan has made to the sector.

Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault

Team 2022-2023

Our Leadership Team

GCASA has appreciated a committed and passionate leadership team.

Jane Barr
CEO

Jo Ayres
Manager Business Operations

Kate Neocleous
Clinical Manager

Sheri McDonald
Senior Clinician CCU & Family Violence

Marg Jans
Senior Clinician – REFOCUS Service

Lenin Thenamirtham
Senior Clinician- Intake

Raechelle Butterfield
Senior Clinician - SASS Child and Family

Maryrose Norton
Acting Senior Clinician SASS

Our Counselling & Advocacy Team

GCASA has appreciated a committed and passionate counselling team.

- * Abigail Ruzive-Makura
- * Amanda Harris
- * Angele James
- * Annette Smith
- * Bastie Chakauya
- * Bobby Cole
- * Bhanu Inapudi
- * Caroline Gale
- * Catiray Poiani-Cordella
- * Emily Fenech
- * Felyce Milojevic
- * Kerri Rixon
- * Kim Greening
- * Kate Butler
- * Kate O'Connor
- * Maryrose Norton
- * Raechelle Butterfield
- * Tanya Doig
- * Rishi Sharma
- * Scar Parke-Deer
- * Swati Joshi
- * Renee Taylor

Community Education & Prevention Team

- * Bianca Pezzutto
- * Alisha Gilliland

SL & RR Team

- * Kim Savige



New Wave Project Team & Peer Educators

- * Skye De Vent
- * Fee Doller
- * Rachael Walters
- * Stephen Whelan
- * Bryanna Paytner

Our Reception Administration Business Operations team

- * Tegan Copelin
- * Anna Ripper
- * Jodie Jans
- * April Johns
- * Helen Cross
- * Tineke Westwood
- * Emma Seabrook

Crisis Care Team

Inner Gippsland A/H team

- * Bernie Caldwell
- * Mel Gordoio
- * Emily Fenech
- * Katie Gallop
- * Lill Cunningham
- * Marisca Seinen
- * Raechelle Butterfield
- * Renee Rainbow
- * Tanya Doig
- * Abigail Ruzive-Makura

Outer Gippsland A/H team

- * Kaylene Unitt
- * Leonie Cooke
- * Karen Ellingsen
- * Jane Bailey-Riley

Former Staff

To the staff who have left GCASA, we thank you for your contribution and wish you all the best.

With thanks

- * Jo Ayres
- * Sarah Kamoen
- * Ben Rapley
- * Sally Gafa
- * Emily Kerstjens
- * Raelene De Luca
- * Cassie Kennedy
- * Megan Vane
- * Mehtab Dhillon
- * Michelle James
- * Amy Knee
- * Lorraine Cartechini
- * Ben Rapley
- * Christine Smith
- * Jessica Elliott
- * Kim Jacobs



GCASA would acknowledge the role of Raelene Del Lucca who has served GCASA as our Reception Administrator and Quality Officer role. We appreciate the care, compassion and commitment Raelene has shown in her quality role at GCASA.



Chair's Report

On behalf of the GCASA Board of Governance I am privileged to present the 2022/23 Annual Report. Once again, the dedication and professionalism of all the staff throughout this last year has ensured that GCASA has continued to offer outstanding and timely services to the community of Gippsland and beyond. For this I would like to commend each one of them. Under the outstanding leadership of the CEO, Jane Barr and the senior management team, the organisation continues to grow in reach and reputation.

I would like to thank the Board Members for their unwavering support and commitment. It was with regret that we farewelled Trent Kooyman and Danielle Lowe. Their contribution has been highly appreciated and we wish them well in the future. I would like to welcome to the Board Mel Cain in her role as Treasurer. She brings experience and knowledge to the organisation and since her appointment has worked tirelessly to ensure the financial reporting is of the highest standard. I would also like to welcome Geraldine Jones and Holly Perriam, each bringing a wealth of knowledge that will

strengthen the Board. Thank you also to current members Vice Chair, Kaye Borgelt, and Yumna Ahmed, for their continued work and dedication.

During the year, the focus of the Board has been on reviewing and revising the organisations strategic priorities to take us forward. The focus on governance and advocacy alongside embedding a trauma informed framework that is evidence based will ensure that GCASA continues to offer the best possible service for clients, and that all employees are well supported and trained to the highest standards.

There have been many highlights during the year, as can be seen from this Annual Report. I feel very privileged to be supported in my role as Chair. We, as a Board will continue to work and advocate on behalf of GCASA to reach all members of the community that have need of the service with our aim to eliminate all forms of sexual harm.

Thank you to those who continue to work professionally and personally to make this community a safer and better place.

Val Prokopiv
Chair



CEO Report

As Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA), I begin by acknowledging the Gunai and Kurnai Peoples, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are clients, community members and committed partners. I acknowledge the diverse community at large and remain committed to inclusion.

I would also like to acknowledge those who have been impacted by sexual harm and trauma. At GCASA we work together to build a strong culture of inclusion, safety, respect; and continuance learning to ensure all members of our community have an opportunity to heal in a supportive and professional environment.

GCASA's values and principles are:

- Respect. Holding feelings, wishes and rights at the core of everything we do.
- Empowerment. Supporting choice, self-determination, resilience and human rights.

- Dignity. Worthy of being treated in a safe, thoughtful and respectful manner.
- Integrity. Uncompromised commitment to accountability, rights and ethics.

GCASA sets strong standards and has a responsibility to address injustice and uphold its values and principles. To do this GCASA has worked collaboratively with stakeholders over the last twelve months. These include Gippsland Community Legal Service, Victim Assistance Service, The Circle Program, and with Victoria Police. GCASA also is working collaboratively with the Specialist Family Violence Court Network which is an important new initiative established as part of the Morwell Magistrate Court.

As part of our Diversity and Inclusion Plan, we are very proud to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and partners who have provided advice and support which has assisted GCASA to strengthen its Cultural Safety approach. I would like to acknowledge and thank our partners Gippsland East and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEEGAC); Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Centre, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), The Gathering Place; and Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) for their continued commitment to working together.





During the reporting period GCASA has continued to operate in accordance with the current Business Continuity Plan and continues to review it, responding and updating as required. Post COVID-19 also saw the introduction of a more flexible service delivery model where GCASA offers telehealth and an in-person service to its clients. Despite the post pandemic challenges, GCASA has continued to progress its strategic priorities, maintain innovation and improve its service response. Our Waiting Well Strategy continues to be effective in enabling GCASA to meet service demand.

GCASA has continued to invest in its employees. GCASA has strengthened its commitment to, and corporate focus on the health, wellbeing, and empowerment of its staff with a robust focus on staff wellbeing. We provide support and monitor the ongoing wellbeing of staff through effective Human Resource management. We also support initiatives that are staff-led promoting a culture of wellness across the organisation.

During this last year, GCASA's staff wellbeing subcommittee has remained active and committed to the shared responsibility of supporting staff. GCASA has held staff wellbeing days supporting staff connections and increasing peer support. This has included the development of a Community of Practice which is led by peers for peers. The Staff Wellbeing Strategy has created a greater sense of connectedness and resilience across the various work areas of GCASA.

During the reporting period, GCASA is operating with the lowest waiting time in 5 years. We continue to apply quality assurance, which includes refining systems, being in a position to assess need and prioritise the needs of all people being referred to our service with GCASA clients being seen within 5 days. This has been credited to the improvement of our client prioritisation system, including risk assessment and matching with our Counsellor Advocates. Currently GCASA has been able to allocate clients to primary Counsellor Advocates within two weeks of referral to our service.

As CEO, I am very proud of the professionalism and passion of all GCASA employees. They have provided the appropriate supports including referral pathways and care to clients. Our Prevention Team work tirelessly to engage and connect the community in need to GCASA services, ensuring that access to services is of the highest priority. This together with The Prevention Team's highly promoted community education and community development initiatives have led to a greater engagement of community this year.

The appointment of GCASA Finance Officer (Accountant) and administrative role has also led to the strengthening of our Financial Reporting and overall Financial Management system.

Accreditation Summary

Strategic Priorities

GCASA has successfully embedded three important strategic priorities during the last twelve months. These strategic priorities included.

1. The Client Voice Framework. This framework will be embedded into all areas of work with GCASA reviewing its Client Feedback Form and creating a user-friendly feedback system.
2. The continuing development of the 'Client Services and Engagement' service with the responsibility to support the entry and continued engagement of GCASA clients and ensure ongoing feedback as part of continued quality assurance to service provision through a cycle of reflective practice.
3. Establishing strong relationships with the Victims Assistance Program (VAP), the new Family Violence Court Network, remaining as an executive participating partner within the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance and Prevention space.
4. Maintaining a strong partnership with Local Governance Group of the Multidisciplinary Centre in Morwell.
5. Ensure GCASAs Financial Reporting systems are developed and are implemented effectively.
6. Attracting high quality employee and volunteers through Diversifying our workplace and our Board.
7. Embed Trauma Informed Practice across the Organisation with six employees undertaking the Graduate Diploma of Developmental Trauma with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

GCASA's mission statement is 'To educate, support, advocate and empower the Gippsland community to improve safety, equity and quality of life by reducing the incidence and impact of sexual assault, trauma and family violence'. It is with pride that I thank the GCASA employees who have upheld this, who continue to work in teams as dedicated professionals. Their continued efforts, passion, and commitment, hold GCASA as the pinnacle for the highest quality service and we continue to re-evaluate, reflect and enhance services.

To the Leadership team, a special thank you for your tireless work, mentoring, professionalism and duty of care for staff; and to the Board for your leadership and governance, passion, and commitment to the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault.

Jane Barr
CEO





Clinical Service Report

Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) with the commitment to providing best practice trauma informed care is inspired by the strength and courage of people in Gippsland who join with GCASA to move towards healing from trauma and improving their overall safety, health and wellbeing. GCASA continues to learn from clients who trust in our service. The courage and strength of our clients reinforce the responsibility GCASA holds for advocating for system change and mobilising community responsibility through education and awareness raising to create a community free from sexual assault and violence.

Staff's contribution to the shared vision of GCASA has been highly valued and recognised as a source of great strength and achievement of the organisation. Staff demonstrate their support of one and other through the reciprocal professional development of colleagues by generously sharing their areas of expertise and professional resources both informally in their day-to-day work and formally in the Community of Practice sessions.

There continues to be a high demand at all our sites, for counselling, advocacy and Crisis Care response. An enormous amount of energy has been targeted towards the transition to the new client record management system in time for the new financial year. This change process has been met with positivity and hopefulness by staff that the new system will allow for greater efficiency and structure to support the GCASA's clinical practice.

This year staff were provided with the opportunity to participate in the Blue Knot Foundation - Trauma Informed Practice training that underpins GCASA therapeutic and advocacy work. Trauma informed practice guides every aspect of the organisation from prevention initiatives to intake processes to assessment and intervention planning to the office setting design and the development of resources. Counselling and advocacy include the Blue Knot Foundations three phased approach of safety and stabilisation, processing, and integration. GCASA staff understand the nature of trauma, its impacts, and possibilities for improving health and wellbeing and recovery with our clients. Opportunities in the coming year include enhancing GCASA approach to developmental trauma informed practice in our work with children, young people and their families.

GCASA has embarked in a research study developed by Dr Vivienne Colegrove and the University of Melbourne called Tuning Relationships with Music (TRM). Staff have undertaken extensive training in the facilitation of TRM. TRM is a form of family counselling where parents and teens are assisted to improve their relationship and reduce conflict, using music as a way of working on the nonverbal parts of their communication and managing emotions. It is envisioned that TRM will compliment the work GCASA does with parents and teens.

GCASA continues to develop the senior clinical team to strengthen and enhance the clinical supervision and guidance that supports staff and ensures quality delivery to service users. Opportunity for career advancement has been a feature of the past year as staff have undertaken acting roles and clinical supervision training.



GCASA supervisors are committed to providing our counsellor advocates with clinical guidance and personal support and have supported the broader team including prevention and administrative staff and students to support the health and well-being of our workers.

GCASA considers holistic approaches to supporting clients to improve their health and wellbeing and following the limitations imposed by the Covid pandemic has re-established group work as an adjunct to counselling and advocacy. GCASA has partnered with specialist facilitators to offer a range of group work opportunities for clients such as trauma informed yoga, creative journaling and mindfulness.

Several GCASA staff new to the specialist sexual assault sector participated in the SASVic orientation training. The orientation training program was developed and delivered by SASVic and a range of external service providers. The orientation program presented participants with the opportunity to broaden and deepen the necessary skills and competencies to help build consistent practice approaches for new specialist sexual assault workers within our service and across the specialist sexual assault sector. Training areas included 3 specific areas of learning:

- Understanding Sexual Assault – foundational knowledge (dynamics, responsibilities, vicarious trauma, systems, policies and legal content)

- Therapeutic Approaches and Modalities – building therapeutic skills and knowledge (Trauma informed basics, suicide prevention and
- Building inclusive and accessible practice – building skills and knowledge to work with priority cohorts who experience service and systems barriers (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and LGBTQ+ people)

I would like to sincerely thank all of the committed and passionate staff of GCASA for their wonderful support to the people of Gippsland, I am truly humbled to be a part of this wonderful team.

Kate Neocleous
Clinical Manager





Therapeutic Intake Report

The Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) operates a centralised Intake and Demand Management System. Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) employs a team with specialist knowledge of sexual assault, trained in trauma-informed best practice. GCASA understands and respects it is the client who is the expert of their own lives.

We value autonomy and support each person's decision-making in their journey of recovery following an experience of sexual assault. We believe people come to GCASA with goals for which they seek assistance to achieve. Therefore, our aim is to facilitate each person's reconnection with their personal agency, working together in a way that maintains dignity and fosters hope.

It is our position that each person's initial contact with the service via reception through to intake, is a key opportunity to convey these messages and extend a respectful invitation to work in partnership.

To achieve this GCASA has developed a centralised Intake service strongly underpinned by therapeutic principles. The centralised Intake serves the functions

of welcoming, accepting, inviting, containing, screening and actively supporting an individual who quite often is in a heightened state of arousal. It ensures that GCASA has a consistent approach to supporting our clients and the organisation's demand management goals.

Creating one point of access has many advantages in the delivery of sexual assault services. The centralised intake model enables GCASA to:

- Promote one phone number across the Gippsland region.
- Offer dedicated counselling staff to listen to and address the immediate and short-term needs of the client.
- Offer a streamlined response, i.e., a first appointment with a counsellor can be organised anywhere in the region during the first phone call.
- Efficiently track progress of a client's referral from point of contact through to allocation of a Counsellor/Advocate (C/A).
- Provide a therapeutic response to the client's goals and needs arising throughout the referral and intake process.



GROUP MINDFULNESS: RESILIENCE & BEING PRESENT

JANE DARLING
Yoga and Mindfulness Teacher
Karma Yoga with Jane

SUPPORTED BY
GCASA Counsellor Advocate

At the MDC 31-41
Buckley Street, Morwell
6 sessions for 1 hour each

1.00PM-2.00PM
FRIDAYS
01 Sept 08 Sept
15 Sept 22 Sept
29 Sept 06 Oct

WHO IS IT FOR?

- Anyone impacted by sexual assault
- Includes impacted friends and family

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- Develop insight, compassion and learn to ground yourself
- Try different techniques that help with focus, relaxation & attention
- Learn to be non-judgmental toward your thoughts & emotions
- Stress relief, improve stress & manage life's challenges better
- Themes include sensory awareness, sound baths, breath exercises, guided meditations & gratitude
- No judgment, No expectations & No experience required

Questions/Registration Contact Intake at 51343922 or talk to your Counsellor Advocate for referral

- Improve accuracy of data recording of wait lists for counselling services on IRIS and Microsoft 365D; and
- Offer a comprehensive demand management system prioritising client need.

The Intake Team are highly experienced clinicians are the first point of contact to our service for clients, respond in a trauma informed manner through providing assessment and counselling support.

Clients who enter our service have sometimes struggled to reach out in the past and can experience feelings of shame and fear of judgement. Our Intake Team ensure that each and every interaction for the client is of a high standard and they are shown compassion and respect during the process.

We have five (5) dedicated staff members, in the Intake Team, Kerri Rixon, Kim Greening, Scar Park-Deere, Annette Smith and Renee Rainbow. They are spread across our sites at Bairnsdale, Morwell, Wonthaggi and Warragul. This ensures that we are not only able to offer phone support

for the majority of our new clients, but also face to face response for those who call in to our offices across Gippsland. Each member of our team brings their own individual expertise in varied areas and have worked previously in mental health outreach, care coordination, housing and crisis accommodation, Family Violence, supporting the LGBTQI community and Alcohol and Other Drugs experience.

Having this level of knowledge across the team allows us to provide comprehensive support and advocacy for clients during their intake and assessment phase at GCASA. The staff are committed to their ongoing training, education and sharing of knowledge to ensure best outcomes for clients and all those who are impacted by sexual assault.

This year we were able to move to our new Client Reporting System, (SRS), which was a challenging yet exciting time for the Intake Team, as they were able to see the benefits of SRS as an ongoing client management system which will eliminate the need for paper files.

Quite some time was spent transferring data from our existing system, the team took on this challenge and were able to complete this task successfully.

Our working relationship with the Sexual Offences Criminal Investigation Team (SOCIT) continues grow, with the ability to work together within the Multidisciplinary Centre allowing regular meetings throughout the week, getting to know each other, and working in a collaborative manner to support our mutual clients.

We would like to thank the SOCIT members throughout Gippsland for their support throughout the year.

Lenin Thenamirtham
Senior Clinician Intake





Innovation in Child and Family Service

The Child and Family Service has been active for just over a year since launching in 2022 after recognising a growing need for our service to enhance our assessments and work more dynamically in our support alongside families with complex situations.

A Senior Clinician position (Raechelle Butterfield) and two Counsellor/Advocates (Emily Fenech and Abigail Ruzive-Makura) were recruited for this new program in May 2022 and swiftly commenced trialling a new approach of meeting with primary caregiver/s for a minimum of four structured sessions to build trust and rapport with them and develop a robust understanding of the referred child's broader family history, current presentation, and the caregiver's perspective of the family's needs, strengths and any parenting challenges.

The information gathered across these four parent/caregiver sessions is then formed into a new Assessment report to guide recommendations to the family and other key services about what further GCASA intervention might look like and informs the planning of any recommended direct

engagement with the child. The Counsellor/Advocates are based at the Morwell office but offer outreach to clients at GCASA's locations in Warragul, Leongatha, and Wonthaggi, and have also provided outreach to Sale and at client's schools when clinically recommended.

Strengths and Outcomes one year in...

A cursory analysis of data over the period of May 2022 to May 2023 indicated that:

- Approximately 100 clients had engaged with the Child and Family team approach.

And of these 100 cases.

- Eight (8) were referrals for children which involved the Child and Family Counsellor Advocate coworking with a Counsellor Advocate who are directly working with a sibling through the REFOCUS Service.
- Twelve (12) cases for complex adolescents where Children & Young Person's Care Coordinator (CYPCC) supported with consultation and facilitating engagement with GCASA service (clients were often in out of home care & experiencing sexual exploitation)

- Eighteen (18) were family groups (where multiple siblings were referred to SASS service)
- Sixty-Five (65) families where the parent/ carers were involved in some child-focused parent work during the assessment/ intervention.

The Child and Family Team met together in May 2023 to reflect on the program one year on and shared thoughts on what the strengths and achievements have been and what focus the next year may hold to continue to enhance the service provision.

The emergent strengths of the approach were identified as:

- The service focuses on the carer as the key safe person to support their child.
- There are great benefits of spending the time required to build rapport and trust with parents with the view that they are the key relationship in their child's world and can enhance the benefits of GCASA intervention with their active involvement.
- The relationships we build with the children, supports that their voice is present and heard and that they have their own valuable insights to contribute in regard to their recovery and goals.
- Early intervention enables an opportunity to provide the environment for parents and their children to experience success, mutual enjoyment in a therapeutic space and sense of a hope filled future.
- Strength-based approach, building on existing strengths within the family that empowers parents to respond to their children in a predictable, attuned manner that meets their child's emotional and developmental needs during and after our time with the family.
- Counsellor Advocates creating consistent and safe relationships with children who may experience disruption to their care giver relationship due to CP intervention. This allowed for smoother reconnection at time when service was interrupted, and we have

received multiple reports of client feedback from children that they 'squealed in delight' when able to reengage with their counsellor.

- Recognising the power of the subtle changes for parents and the impact this has on the parent child relationship. At times parents have found it challenging to remain engaged throughout the Child and Family approach for various reasons, however even on occasions where families have withdrawn before completion of the service plan, Counsellor/ Advocates have observed and/or families have self-reported experiencing benefits from the support and resources provided in early engagement.

Future focus for Service Development, Profile and Awareness

As an outcome from the team's reflections, priorities to focus on in the next year are to:

- Improve reporting systems to capture Child & Family Service delivery data.
- Continued development of the Practice Framework over the next 12 months
- Further development and implementation of Assessment Framework
- Establish a protocol with Child Protection and SOCIT to support a coordinated response to children that promotes opportunities to support children in a trauma informed way, such as prioritising accessing support from their engaged counsellor when clients are attending the MDC for SOCIT/CP processes.
- Increasing collaboration with other services and care teams

Partnerships are essential to the success of the Child and Family service approach as families require wrap around support to ensure their basic needs (practical and emotional safety) are being met in order for them to have capacity to address the sexual trauma issues with GCASA. Key partners are DFFH: Child Protection, The Orange Door, Windermere, Child Youth Mental Health Service, Aboriginal and cultural services, and family service agencies such as Anglicare and Berry Street. These relationships enhance



our services response by being able to share information and relevant assessments around mental health, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), cultural support plans, child wellbeing/development/attachment and family functioning/Attunement. GCASA can continue to strengthen collaboration with these services over the next 12 months by attending meetings of these services, and client care teams, to talk about the Child and Family service and approach and create pathways to providing timely consultations and warm referrals for clients who may most benefit from this family approach to counselling.

Client Outcomes

GCASA receive a number of re-referrals of children from families with whom GCASA has worked extensively previously, sometimes over several previous episodes of care. One family of five school aged children, four referred to the SASS program and one referred to REFOCUS, were referred back to GCASA in 2022 having previous episodes of care with GCASA that were short term due to limited engagement. In response to the new referrals, we were able to take the new Child and Family approach and initially engaged the children's two parents in four

sessions of further assessment to develop rapport before planning intervention with them and their children. The outcome was that the children's parents were able to meaningfully engage and consistently bring their children for appointments throughout the period of long term and intensive intervention. The fact that the approach supported the development of therapeutic rapport and built the family's trust with our service meant that even though the engagement was interrupted for a period of time due to further disclosures and Child Protection intervention and placement of children in out of home care, the family and children chose to return to GCASA for support when the placements had settled.

I commend our Counsellor/Advocates on their fantastic work and recognise the privilege it is to be trusted by families and how rewarding it is to be able to contribute to strengthening family relationships and promote safety for children.

Raechelle Butterfield

Senior Clinician



REFOCUS Service

The REFOCUS service is an early intervention and therapeutic service for children and young people up to the age of 18 years, who have problematic and harmful sexual behaviours. The approach is trauma informed and culturally safe, with sexual behaviour viewed within age and developmental, relational, family, and environmental context.

The REFOCUS Service team continues to grow and develop with two positions, supported through an increase in funding. This brings the team to 4 clinicians collaborating with the Senior Clinician. The service works across Gippsland and can provide an outreach service.

The REFOCUS team have continued building collaborative working relationships with key agencies such as The Orange Door, Anglicare Gippsland, Quantum Support Services, Adolescent programs, Gippsland Youth Justice case management and Children Court Diversion teams, the Sale and Bairnsdale Sexual Offences Investigation Team, Child Protection, and schools.

As part of this development the REFOCUS team have been increasingly providing secondary consultation to schools and

professionals and will continue to strengthen our work in early intervention supporting children and families at the earliest level. Our work with Child Protection remains an essential priority for the REFOCUS team, as is participation in the service of parents and families.

The team has also participated in Sexual Assault Support Services (Vic) trainings over the course of the year. This is in addition to organisational trainings, ongoing peer to peer learning opportunities through the monthly case practice discussions, performance and development reviews and individual work plans, all contribute to the team's ongoing development in a way that espouses collaborating and the sharing of knowledge, skills, and capacity all essential to providing quality outcomes for our clients.

The goals over the past year have been team development and service quality will remain a work plan focus over the next year, with an additional focus on reviewing and refining processes and documents to align with service sector changes and those at a more localised level.

Marg Jans
Senior Clinician

East Gippsland & Wellington

Over the year, GCASA has experienced organisational growth over the reporting period, which has led to increase in staff numbers in supporting our clients in Sale and Bairnsdale areas.

Marg has been collaborating closely with a new team of Counsellor Advocates who are embracing the opportunities for peer to peer sharing of interests, skills, resources, and reflections around their approach to the work. The team have been able to connect with the larger staffing team in Staff Team meetings, Community of Practice meetings, Wellbeing meetings and more recently over three days in the Blue Knot Foundation – Trauma training in the three-phase approach at Traralgon. Staff also participate in weekly team briefings to support planning across sites over the week.

A key focus of the East Gippsland Work Plan is in strengthening of partnerships and relationships with GCASA's Key stakeholders. There has been much work done also with establishing the In Reach Agreement with The Orange Door and with the ongoing work with community service agencies.

The intention is to promote the GCASA profile and service delivery within Bairnsdale and Sale. Therefore, the Bairnsdale and Sale Teams will be collaborating with the Community Education and Prevention Team through a work plan, to support an equitable community free of sexual assault and violence.

Through the early preventative and community education work support, advocate and empower the Gippsland community so we at GCASA can be part of the move towards safety, equity, and quality of life, by reducing the incidence and impacts of sexual assault, trauma, and family violence.

Marg Jans

Senior Clinician





Crisis Care Services

The Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault delivers crisis care to support those who have experienced recent trauma following a recent sexual assault and, in the afterhours, those who are in crisis following family violence.

Highlights over 2022-23

It is pleasing to note that the past year was one marked by consistency in the crisis care services. While clients may experience significant chaos, distress and instability, our team and processes have consistently delivered them supportive and compassionate care and assistance. The team offered safety and understanding to those in crisis and provided recognition of the impact of trauma and a pathway to recovery. It is also pleasing to share that as I write, we are in the process of extending our afterhours family violence crisis response service and will in the coming year deliver this essential service to people across all of Gippsland.

In 2022- 2023, we were incredibly pleased to be given access to crisis funding which enables us to better support clients who have experienced sexual assault. This funding has filled a previous gap in access to material aid and emergency accommodation for those

no longer safe in their homes, vulnerable or at risk of future harm due a sexual assault. This ensures clients receive a wrap-around service that is responsive to their physical, emotional, and practical needs as well.

GCASA have worked tirelessly with our partners, including the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Team (SOCIT) and Family Violence Unit (FVU), Latrobe Regional Hospital (LRH), The Orange Door and Safe Steps, to ensure our clients receive a comprehensive and holistic early intervention responsive to the individual needs of each person and their circumstances.

GCASA's collaboration has produced agreements with local hospitals, enhancement of referral pathways for all key stakeholders and the production of tailored service information for our local community and crisis services. A highlight has been the development of specific web pages accessed via QR codes printed on wallet-sized service cards. These pages share details about our crisis care services and increase our accessibility, particularly during the afterhours.

Across the year, our partnerships have supported smooth transitions between agencies as well as education opportunities for our clinical staff. A highlight from our local working group collaboration was the invitation to participate in education sessions on non-fatal strangulation with local Police. A goal over the coming year is for all clinical staff to attend this training and better understand the risks and impacts of this serious and high-risk violent behaviour which will assist our teams to have informed conversations with clients around their health and wellbeing and options following an assault. Our afterhours team welcomed a presentation from the eSafety Commissioner's office which increased staff awareness of technology safety risks and promoted improved safety planning with our clients.

Our sexual assault crisis care network with local SOCIT Police and medical professionals providing the forensic services was off to a strong start in 2022, with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) Head of Service of Clinical Forensic Medicine, Maria Nittis participating in a number of our local network meetings and



sharing her wealth of knowledge about the broad range of forensic services provided by what is in fact a very small specialist forensic team. A significant achievement given the statewide demand and breadth of services VIFM provide. After connecting and enhancing our local network through this collaboration in 2022, we have since witnessed a period of change for the forensic medical services across the state. GCASA look forward to seeing the shape forensic medical services in our region will take in the future.

While the year has begun a period of transition within the broader family violence sector with the roll-out of a new crisis response model, I am pleased to report that GCASA's existing processes and high standard of service by the afterhours team has meant that the family violence afterhours crisis service was already strongly aligned with the new model. Our afterhours team have

GCASA would like to thank our partner services, the Victoria Police, the SOCIT, FVU and all members working within local stations, our local forensic medical examiners; the VIFM nurses and doctors who have worked collaboratively with us across the year; the Orange Door and our local hospitals who have welcomed our collaboration.

A special thanks to Senior Sergeant Ben Vahland, Family Violence Training Officer with Victoria Police, for sharing with us his wealth of knowledge and passion for educating others about non-fatal strangulation.

GCASA are extremely grateful for the support received from organisations across the year, including the Moe Baptist Church and Bettermental, for their donations of clothing, care packs and other essential care items which provide comfort and ease the burden of change and Nicholsons Soaps for their continuance donations.

I would also like to personally thank the GCASA crisis care service staff for their passion, enthusiasm and responsiveness to clients, no matter what time of the day, or night. It has been such a privilege to have spent the last 5 and a half years within an amazing group of individuals who are committed to ensuring people receive the best support possible in a time of crisis.

To each and every one of you, I say thank you. I would also personally like to say thanks also to the GCASA leadership along with an incredibly special thank you to our CEO Jane Barr whose tireless support make the crisis service what it is.

Sheri McDonald
Senior Clinician

Graduate Program and Traineeship Program (2023)

The Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) nominated trainees will participate in accredited training of new and or early to careers sexual assault workers employed directly through the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA). The Training program has been designed to support the strengthening of the Victorian sexual assault and family violence service system through:

- deepening and broadening the skills base of specialist workers within the family violence and sexual assault prevention and response workforces
- increasing capability across all roles in the sexual assault and family violence response workforces
- strengthening family violence and sexual assault capabilities in cohort specific workforces that intersect with family violence and sexual assault.

The accredited package is an indicative program developed by the Sexual Assault Services (Vic) and in partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

This program ensures new workers practicing in the sector can broaden and deepen the necessary skills and competencies to help build consistent practice approaches. This traineeship model will enable GCASA to attract develop competencies for those seeking to transition to the specialist sexual assault sector.

This accredited program will enable GCASA to: recruit and employ new trainee/s or upskill current employee/s especially in the more rural community of East Gippsland providing new graduates and trainees with a comprehensive Orientation program.



The funding enabled GCASA to employ six (6) employees to take up placements in the Graduate Certificate in Development Trauma offered in partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

This training will cover Four (4) specific areas of learning:

1. Understanding Sexual Assault – foundational knowledge for specialist sexual assault practitioners. Training on:
 - Understanding sexual assault and sexual assault services (dynamics, responsibilities, vicarious trauma)
 - Case notes
 - Assessment and case formulation
 - Systems and policies
 - Sexual violence education
 - Legal context
 - MARAM implementation
 - Policy advocacy
2. Therapeutic Approaches and Modalities – building therapeutic skills and knowledge including:
 - ASIST (suicide prevention)
 - Psychological First Aide
3. Building inclusive and accessible practice – building skills and knowledge to work with priority cohorts who experience service and systems barriers. Training on working with:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
 - LGBTIQ+ people
4. Support the enrolment of 6 employees in the Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma (10800NAT)



The aim of this program is to expand knowledge base about neurobiology of trauma in working with and supporting children, young people and families affected by the cumulative developmental and neurobiological harm caused by abuse, neglect, sexual harm, and family violence. This program has been developed to facilitate the process of enhanced exploration and application of knowledge and practice of trauma-based work in a range of contexts.

The delivery of the Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma (10800NAT) will be delivered with blended including virtual classroom sessions, and 3 x 2-day block throughout the duration of the course. Participants will complete 22 modules at their own pace. Additional support of 1 hour per month is offered to support participants.

Learning modules include:

- Normative brain and body development
- Defining trauma and the concepts of relationally based developmental trauma.
- Overall impacts of trauma on infants, children, and adolescents
- The neurobiology of culture
- Examining the possible impacts of working with traumatised children and young people
- Constructing a developmental trauma informed practice map to summarise key messages as they are contextualised to current sexual assault work.

GCASA has full representation in the program, and feedback so far as been positive. The participants have been offered participation in a monthly Community of Practice which has enabled further embedding and sharing of their learnings.



Prevention – Community Education Development Initiatives

At Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault, we provide services and supports to people impacted by sexual harm, both long past and more recent. We also work with our partners and our community to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

To this end, the Prevention team have undertaken a range of projects, events, and activities with the intention of building capacity, connection and knowledge of our partner agencies and our community about our service and supports. In alignment with our strategic direction and workplan, we have intentionally sought out, created, and strengthened partnerships to build connection with diverse communities, as many people in these communities are at higher risk of violence and sexual harm, but less likely to seek supports.

In doing this, we have partnered with agencies including Centre for Multicultural Youth, Gippsland Multicultural Services, The Orange Door, Headspace, Latrobe Youth Space, Gippsland Pride Initiative, Gippsland Disability Advocacy, Child Protection, New Wave Gippsland, and Anglicare to name a few. We continue to work with our existing and valued partners including Monash School of Rural Health, Federation University, Gippsland Women's Health, Monash Health (Medical students), Gippsland Lakes Complete Health as well as the education and health sectors more broadly.

The following is a snapshot of key projects, activities and partnerships developed and strengthened through our work this year. As always, working at grass roots events like these also allow us to talk to people who may not know who GCASA are, and to reconnect with and reaffirm those who do.

Possum Skin Cloak



This beautiful project, which has taken place over the past two years, came to fruition in December, with a handing over ceremony at Bullock Island in Lakes Entrance. The project facilitator and artist, Gina Bundle, a proud Monaro-Yuin woman, gifted the cloak to GCASA for safe-keeping and use. The cloak, a piece of art in its' own right, is of great cultural significance and will be displayed and made available to any First Nations woman who wishes to touch or wear it while accessing support at our Bairnsdale office.

This project was initiated and led by Bianca Pezzutto, and involved months of planning, engagement and implementation with First Nations community and service providers in East Gippsland. The relationships built with Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal Healing Service, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Bairnsdale Secondary College, as well as with individual women and families, were foundational to the meaning of this project, for them as well as us. We began this work with the intention of creating a cloak to signify cultural safety and respect that we seek to create in our service, and we finished it with so much more. We learnt about cultural practice, we created connection, we developed our understanding

of cultural respect and safety and how we can build that into and across our practice. The relationships developed and learnings attained through this project will be a basis for future connection and activities with our First Nations communities in East and other parts of Gippsland.

Women on Farms Gathering

Since 1990, the Women on Farms Gathering has taken place every year at a venue in rural Victoria. The event is a coming together of women of all ages who are involved in the agricultural sector and provides an important opportunity to connect, share and celebrate the value of their work, knowledge, and relationships.

As the topic of sexual assault is such a personal and traumatic experience, it is sometimes a difficult for people to seek our services or understand what we do, as there can be a sense of shame, fear of being identified or labelled if a person attends our programs, events, or counselling services.

It was for this reason we relished the opportunity to work with Women on Farms Gathering Yarram as we saw this event as a chance to promote our service and further our work in the prevention of violence and sexual assault.

With the theme of connect, and an offer to present at the conference as a keynote speaker on the first day, we saw it as an opportunity to raise awareness of the drivers of violence and sexual assault.

Many benefits were identified for GCASA to support the women on Farms Gathering.

- New opportunities for connection with the participants and local service providers, community from Gippsland and all over Victoria.
- An opportunity for GCASA to encourage women and girls across Victoria in the farming, remote/rural areas to connect with each other, create networks of support, new relationships and reduce isolation, outside of the Women on Farms Gathering.
- An increase in client engagement in GCASA services, or Sexual Assault Services (SAS Vic) across Victoria because of increased participant awareness.



- An increase in appropriate service referrals due to increased knowledge of services provided by GCASA.
- Raised participant awareness of the drivers of violence against women and sexual assault.
- Networking/idea sharing opportunities with other participants.

Over 120 women attended the event over three days. GCASA staff engaged with many of the participants offering rich insights to the conversations.

Youth partnerships

Centre for Multicultural Youth

Early 2023 saw the beginning of GCASA's involvement in the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) Culture Club initiative. The Culture Club is an ongoing lunch time activity in various secondary schools, that highlights certain issues relevant to young people and their community. For CMY the activities address culture, racism, diversity and respect. For GCASA the activities raised awareness with the students about with Respect, Relationships, Identity, Equality and Equity.

Students approached the table of activities and food and took part in the activities. As the program continued over approximately 4 weeks students began to look for the table and engage with the staff to see what the activity is for that day. Many wonderful discussions have taken place with students and opportunities for us to illicit appropriate and thoughtful answers.

Latrobe Youth Space

GCASA Prevention staff attend the Latrobe Youth Space (LYS) on a regular basis, providing activities as well as information and resources. Our objective when attending the LYS is to build rapport with the young people and engage with them in meaningful ways. This then provides the young people with a space to talk, ask questions and even ask for a referral to our service or others that we might know of. Quite frequently we are cooking hearty meals with the young people and these meals bring a lot of the participants to the table. With the activities we join in and our regular attendance we are creating a warm and friendly atmosphere, where young people will feel comfortable in accessing our services.

Midsumma - LGBTIQ+ inclusion - Gippsland's Day Out, Pride Cup, LGBTIQ+ 101 training

The Prevention staff, including the Sexual Lives & Respectful Relationships team, have attended a number of events including Midsumma (in Melbourne), Gippsland's Day Out (Traralgon), Pride Cup (Warragul) and the Rainbow Brick Road Report Launch (Morwell). Our intention in this work is to build relationships and demonstrate solidarity with the rainbow community through presence, visibility and connection. Data tells us that many people from the LGBTIQ+ community experience sexual assault and violence, but that they may not always feel safe accessing services and supports.



We also acknowledge that, while we have good intentions and generally good practice, we are on all on a learning journey in this evolving space. As such, we sought bespoke LGBTIQ+ 101 training from Gippsland Pride Initiative in February.

This training was delivered in a hybrid model, allowing as many staff from across all sites as possible to attend, and was in response to our growing understanding that although we seek to create a welcoming and inclusive service for people of all sexualities and gender identities, we can always do better, and continued learning is the key to better practice.

Big Respect Gippsland

During the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (25th Nov – 10 Dec, annually) GCASA was privileged to collaborate with 15 organisations to bring local artist Pollyanna Love across East Gippsland to undertake community photo shoots asking people, what is RESPECT.

Pollyanna has previously facilitated a successful Big Picture campaign for Organ donors and for the I do, Same Sex marriage referendum. Pollyanna, accompanied by workers from our partnership organisations such as 54 Reasons, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and Gippsland Women's Health, travelled to 8 locations photographing over 250 participants, each creating a sign of respect. GCASA staff assisted at 4 sites in far East Gippsland and were able to speak with many participants about respect and the drivers of violence. Participants were thankful for the opportunity to hear about our services and that we had travelled to their remote location.

Our staff reported that the opportunity to sit with children and their families and watch or guide the discussions about 'What does respect mean to you.' was the highlight of the project.

At the end of the 16 Days the Big Respect Project culminated in a 3 meter 'Big Picture' launch and exhibition at the Forge Theatre in Bairnsdale on 6th Dec 2023.



Kids as Catalysts

This project seeks to develop skills, knowledge, and leadership capacity in young people as change agents in and for their communities. For the second year in a row, we were asked to take part in the Kids as Catalysts program, led by Kids Thrive and supported by the Bass Coast Community Foundation. We – along with Bass Coast Shire Council, GippSport, Corinella Community House and others are “Community Action Partners” who work to support the young leaders – Grade 5 and 6 students from Bass Coast Primary Schools – to identify, scope and deliver their project on the topic of their choice. Our teams – from Newhaven and Wonthaggi North Primary Schools selected gender equity as the area in which they want to make a difference in their school and community.

Knowing what we do about the key driver of gender-based violence being adherence to rigid gender roles and stereotypes, we jumped at the chance to work with young leaders and their school community about equity, respect, fairness and safety.

The following is a reflection from Kids Thrive and captures the meaning and value of this project, both in terms of our role and the broader context of kids being catalysts for the change they want to see in their community and the world:

I cannot put into words my thanks for your incredible effort ... you can be very proud of the change you made to a student's life. The difference in how the students saw themselves before the program to the positive and quite outstanding way they saw themselves, the community and the world after Kids as Catalysts is amazing. Some students have gone on to take up leadership places in their schools ... and some have taken on a volunteer role with their Community Partners, who have created a junior program to enable this engagement.

Below are some of the reflections from students as part of their personal evaluation which they do in drawing form. The difference made in some of these student's lives is incredible – without you this could not have been achieved and the kids' lives would not have been changed. Jenny Churchill, Programs Coordinator, Bass Coast Kids As Catalysts - Kids Thrive

*I am confident
I can speak in public
I can do anything
I can change the community
People in the community want to help
I made a difference
I got a chance to help
Rewarded by seeing smiling faces
Kids are strong
Kids have good ideas
Anybody can do anything
A small action can bring a big change
There's more to learning than maths and writing
Kids can make a change
It feels good at the end
Be confident
Don't give up
It's fun
Speak up
You can help change your community*

Prevention Education Calendar

This calendar year, we have for the first time implemented a regular calendar of online training and education sessions for both sector colleagues and the wider community. The intention of the calendar training sessions was to create convenient and regular opportunities for those joining to learn more about GCASA's services and supports, build their knowledge around sexual harm, responding to disclosure, being safe online, consent and respectful relationships, as well as the programs, services and supports that we deliver across Gippsland.

The calendar has been very well received and supported, with around 150 people attending the monthly scheduled calendar sessions and others, such as The Orange Door and the Department of Education, requesting tailored sessions for their teams in response to the initiative.

We have also created opportunities for strategic partners to attend an information session and tour of the Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC) in Morwell. In May, representatives from disability sector partners attended a session to hear from our key partners, the Sexual Offences and Child abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) and Windermere Victims Assistance, about our collaborative work, and our partnership with Latrobe Community Health and the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.



Project: Sexual Lives & Respectful Relationships - Peer Relationship Education Partners

A reminder of the beginning...

Late in 2020, New Wave Self Advocacy Group and the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) were successful in an application for an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant to develop, implement and evaluate the Peer Education Relationship Partner (PREP) Project.

Through community partnerships and activities focusing on employment, leadership, advocacy, education and respectful relationships, the Peer Education Relationship Partner (PREP) Project has evolved. This project has continued to create linkages, create options, and build capacity in Gippsland to prevent violence against and abuse of people with disabilities. The partnership with Federation University's Collaborative Evaluation Unit continues to provide external evaluation of the project and provide workshop opportunities for reflection and future planning formalising the strengths and opportunities to learn from our approach.

PREP has been founded on the passion, commitment and good will of local people and organisations who have joined the Network, and who are committed to advocating for people with disabilities. The Network has been instrumental in supporting the project's development in the Gippsland Community and extending the reach of the program to people who may otherwise not have access to such opportunities.

PREP is the umbrella for the Sexual Lives & Respectful Relationships (SL&RR) Network in Gippsland, which oversees delivery of the

SL&RR program in the region. The SL&RR project has continued to provide peer-led education to people with intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and complex communication needs to promote their rights to safe sexual lives and respectful relationships despite covid and other challenges.

Recovery from COVID...

Café catch ups continue to occur bi-monthly, spreading across different LGAs each time. These meetings are a great way to be engaged in communities and provide information about the program and about GCASA's services in a casual way. Invitations are sent out via email a few weeks in advance, designed by Fionna who also books the venues. All are welcome at these events.

In-person presentations have picked up, and the team much prefer face-to-face work, however there is still a significant need for online options for general presentations. The 4 sessions of the full program are still done face-to-face to increase confidentiality and safety in the room and allow for better support for people who may have communication or other needs. We continue to book ourselves to present wherever we can.

Events and presentations...

In February 2023 some of the team had the opportunity to attend the Having a Say conference in Geelong, sponsored by VALID. This was a two-day event with stalls from many different service providers, guest speakers, information sessions and more. SL&RR presented their main presentation to a small theatre of around 30 people as scheduled, then Skye and Kim managed to jump in and replace a missing presenter in the LGBTQIA space.

The PREP project team members presented to multiple audiences, including the GCASA staff group of approximately 35 staff; an MDC induction with SOCIT; and by invitation, the team presented to the local Melba Support Services staff and supported client team in Morwell. This session included activities, break out groups and a presentation using one of the video stories from the program to generate discussion. It was a joint project of the Prevention and SL&RR teams

designed to meet some specific requests from Melba to assist staff in managing some challenges that had arisen. The feedback from this day was extremely positive.

Team members were again involved in the GCASA 16 Days of Activism activity, filming the introduction to one of the days. Rachael Walters was invited and presented to the SASVic AGM at the Melbourne Town Hall, seated on stage with the Victoria Law Reform Commissioner as part of a panel discussing how to better support women with disabilities who are victims. Rachael's talk was extremely well received, and she and Tony (VLRC) had an in-depth discussion over lunch.

Throughout the year PREP has been represented in the media multiple times including Facebook and the Warragul Drouin Gazette. PREP have also been involved with a number of expos and service provider days such as Midsumma in Melbourne, The Traralgon Big Day Out, and Gippsland Women's Health annual forum at the Traralgon Art Centre.

Information sessions have also been delivered to groups including:

- Interact Australia (networking morning tea with multiple networks)
- Yooralla (Drouin)
- Yooralla (Leongatha)
- Community members at bi-monthly café catch ups across all LGAs.
- Baw Baw community
- Latrobe community
- East Gippsland community
- GDAI
- NDIS LACs in South region

Throughout the year the PREP team has presented on our program by way of information sessions, café catch ups, events, and media to over 500 individuals and approximately 30 organisations.

Workshops...

Jo Porter from Federation University facilitated an evaluation meeting in June with the PREP team, Patsie Frawley, Jane Barr, and Kim Savige. The focus of the session was to look at the evaluation

report and the progress of SL&RR to date. There were a number of key themes running through the session:

- SL&RR has come a long way since its inception.
- Peer Educators have developed many skills and higher levels of confidence over time.
- The 'working' model of the program is different to the planned model due to the practicalities of running small groups across such large areas. The proposed model included presenting to large numbers of participants in the program, whereas the experience of the team is that we reach the greatest number of people who are in positions where they can make change, is to our Network and external agencies.
- Our access to community and service providers is growing, and with it so is the growth of people's understanding of the importance of upholding the rights of all, particularly those who often lack a voice.

SL&RR Program and facilitator training...

Facilitator training ran in April and included Program Partner representatives from Interact Australia, a private practice Disability Support Worker, GCASA's new Counsellor Advocate and 5 potential Peer Educators. The training was delivered by Skye De Vent, Rachael Walters, Fionna Hocking, Stephen Whelan, Kim Savige and Helen Spicer. From this group, one Program Partner has gone on to help deliver 2 separate programs. The two Interact staff have been supportive and active in their relationship with GCASA and SL&RR. The new Counsellor Advocate allocated to the program was able to assist with delivery of 2 programs before they finished up. One participant will become an active Peer Educator in future.

Programs have run successfully in Leongatha, Bairnsdale, Warragul, Moe, Drouin, and Traralgon.



Network...

Network meetings have continued quarterly as opposed to monthly; this decision was made after consultation with Network members. Representation at these meetings is varied but includes:

- SL&RR Peer Educators and Program Partners
- New Wave
- Bass Coast Shire
- Federation University
- Anglicare Vic
- Lifeskills Vic
- Yooralla
- Scope
- Latrobe Community Health Service
- Interact Australia
- GDAI

This meeting is chaired by Peer Educator, Rachael Walters. Team catchups and Peer meetings continued throughout the year and allowed team members the opportunity to touch base and plan together and share knowledge.

Peer Educator and Team meetings have been merged this year to accommodate staffing changes and create more cohesiveness among the team. Now all members are together either in person or online for a fortnightly meeting rather than smaller numbers more often at different meetings. Everyone can be together, hear all new information, and be involved in decision making.



Feedback....

Surveys are completed regularly by Network members including Peer Educators, Program Partners, and partnership representatives. Working with Federation University has led to a joint data gathering tool which serves to increase input for continuous evaluation, and also for feedback specific to programs and presentations. We have been able to collect more regular feedback as a result.

Feedback for this last 12 months has been positive:

Peer Educators

The life experience of the Peers and their sharing with us was so important.

Content

The video stories are great... I love the way they get so many different reactions.

It was great finding out where to get help, and information about the MDC.

Information about rights.

Program delivery

The group discussions were wonderful, and I like that people have the right to pass.

SLRR create a safe space for people... Good information.

A good reminder that people living with disabilities have the right to make their own choices.

General

This made me really reflect on whether I sometimes prevent my daughter from understanding her rights. Best part of it was Grant the guide dog!

Challenges

It would be good to get more specific information on how to talk about this stuff with supported residents without crossing professional boundaries.

It is surprising more people do not know about this program.





Telling My Story

The Healing Journey – Men's stories of recovery from childhood sexual abuse

"The stories within this book are a gift given to us by these men. They share their stories with purpose. Their words reach out to other male survivors to bring an understanding only they can give; to tell these men they are not alone and tell the boy inside he is not to blame."

The twenty stories within this book, written by twenty courageous men are a gift. GCASA is proud to have been able to take their stories to Melbourne, Sydney and Ballarat where the welcome was warm, and these stories of hope and resilience spread among many communities. We will continue to work with the authors with gratitude to reach more people and more communities in the future.

This is important work. It is reported that 1 in 9 men (11%) were physically or sexually harmed before the age of 15. Many more go unreported and the real figure will never be known. But that first phone call, that first conversation, that knowledge that every one of the twenty authors stand behind all survivors can begin the healing journey.

"The strength and determination of the authors cannot be undermined, their stories are often traumatic, but they are also powerful. Hope and resilience shines through them all."





Treasurer's Report

In the last 12 months the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault has continued to grow. This growth has occurred because of additional funding received by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for the delivery of sexual assault support services over the last years.

The additional funds were allocated to respond to the growing demand for service and reduce the wait list for our services. GCASA developed a Business Case to increase staffing to respond to meet the service agreement. There have been significant strategies implemented to support the continuing growth of GCASA and to meet all legislative and accounting standards, as well as good corporate governance.

Recommendations from that audit have been embraced as our commitment to continuous quality improvement remains of the highest priority taking all steps to ensure that GCASA is compliant.

These included:

- Ensuring GCASA has the financial infrastructure to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of financial systems and reporting

- Improving Financial Reporting with greater details within our Profit and Loss, through the Monthly Financial Management Report.
- Improving accessibility of reports and cost breakdowns available through an improved Financial Packages (Xero and Fathom)

These recommendations have led to the successful greater accountability to stakeholders. GCASA continues to embed a new accounting package using Xero. Reports to the Board of Governance provide details to support best practice in the oversight of GCASA's financial management, this remains a priority and these reports assist with the Board and operational decision making, and reporting to funding bodies.

The expansion of the Audit & Corporate Risk Subcommittee has led to improved reporting from the Manager Business Operations, CEO, and the engagement of the Board of Governance through the Treasurer.

In my role as Treasurer there are several significant duties to perform. Some of the most important involve the financial information and staying on top of GCASA's financial position, while supporting the overall implementation of the Xero Accounting Package. Current strategies have led to great compliance with audit recommendations. We continue to refine our reporting through these newly embedded systems to ensure GCASA stakeholders have a clear understanding of the financial position and performance of each service stream.

Mel Cane
Treasurer



Donations and Sponsors

During the reporting period, GCASA has benefited from the support and donations of the following organisations and local sponsors or donors.

GCASA are extremely grateful for the support received from organisations across the year, including Restoring Hope, Nicolson River Soaps, Moe Baptist Church, Better Care. The donations of clothing, care packs and other essential care items by these organisations gives clients comfort through times of distress.

- Nicholson River Soaps
- Inner Wheel Warragul
- RMG Accounting
- Private donors
- Restoring Hope
- Baptist Church – Moe



Pictured is Julie Riley and Jane Barr receiving a Donation from Warragul Inner Wheel for children and young people accessing our services.



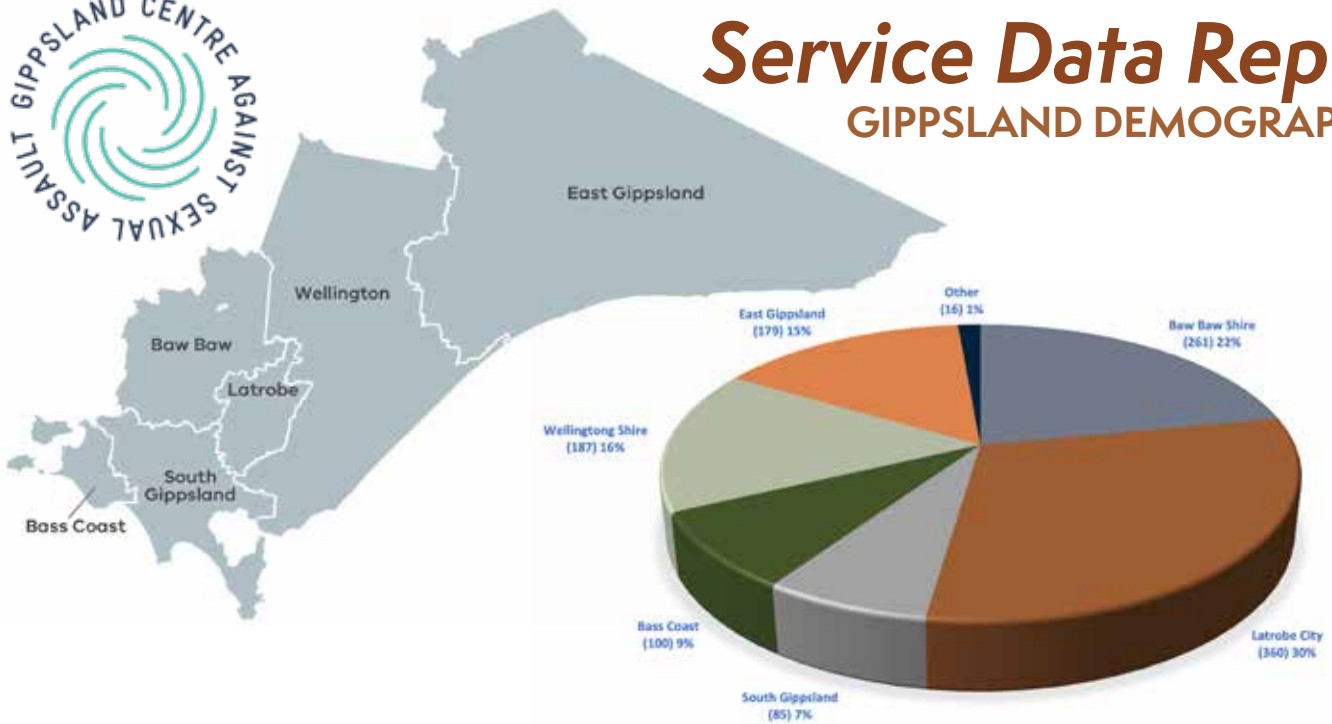
Pictured Nicolson Soaps Owner Bianca who has generously donated to GCASA.



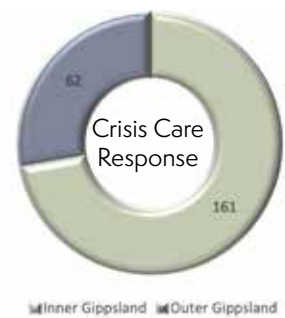
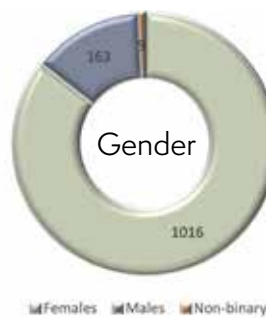
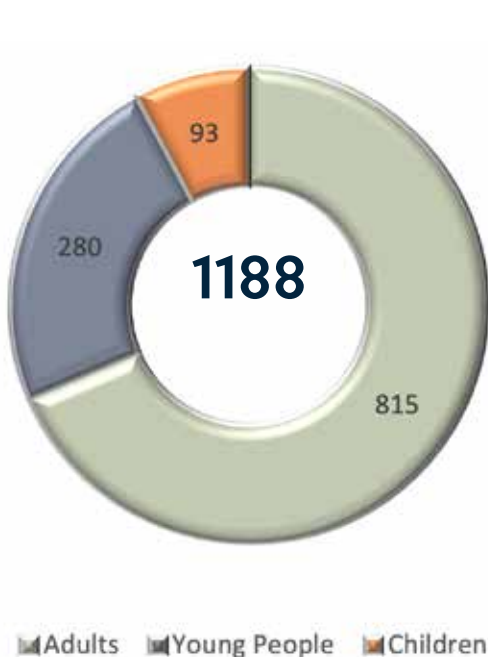


Service Data Report

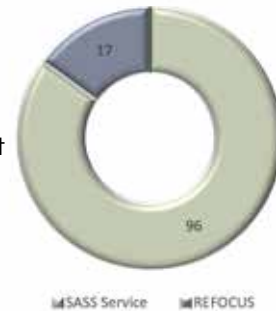
GIPPSLAND DEMOGRAPHICS



Total Clients: Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS)



Clients supported from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture



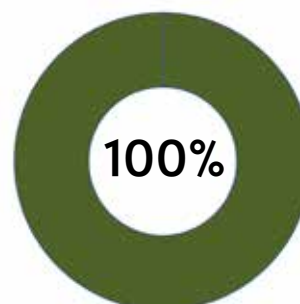
REFOCUS Service: 133

LGA:

- ◆ South Gippsland: 20
- ◆ Baw Baw Shire: 39
- ◆ Latrobe City: 39
- ◆ Bass Coast: 7
- ◆ Wellington Shire: 18
- ◆ East Gippsland: 10



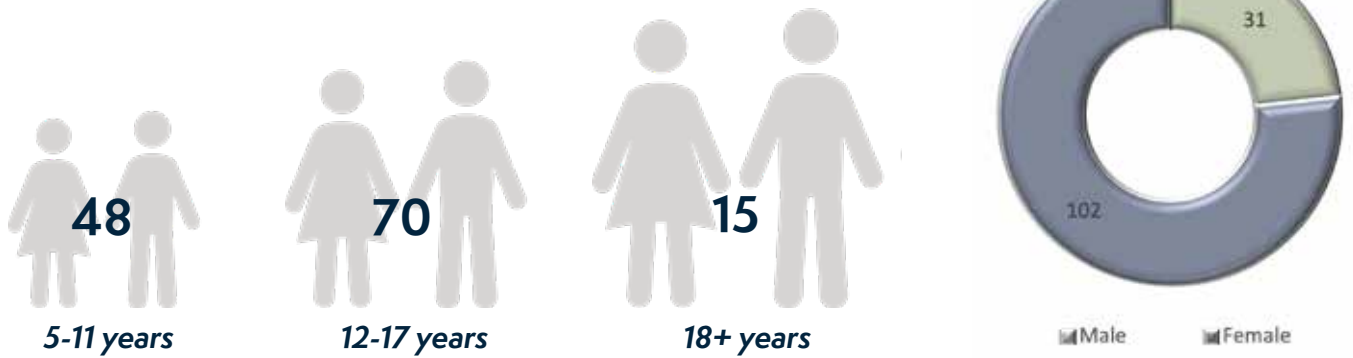
Counselling & Support: 1166



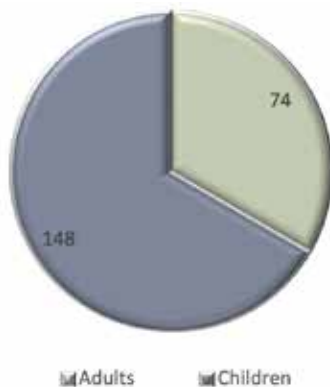
1188 or **100%** of all clients attended for specialist counselling and support.

373 clients were children and young people under 18 years.

Sexually Abusive Behaviours (REFOCUS) Treatment Service (SABTS): 133



Family Violence After hours: 222



Legal & Advocacy Support

GCASA provided legal and court advocacy and support to 31 clients

On our FOI register (2022 - 2023) we have:

- ◆ 21 VOCAT reports requested (Legal Representation)
- ◆ Subpoena's requested: 5 (Legal Representation)
- ◆ FOI client requested records: 1
- ◆ Other legal purposes: 1 client requested record
- ◆ Children's Court: 3

Training & Education

- ◆ 57 training and education sessions delivered to 35 schools and 17 agency settings.
- ◆ Student – Teacher engagement
 - 1924 Secondary schools
 - 12 Tertiary Education settings
 - 24 School Network(s)Personnel
- ◆ Medical – Health Professionals: 110 participants
 - Monash Centre for Rural Health: 43 participants
 - Community Service Providers: 67 participants
- ◆ Youth Specific Services: Ladder, Berry Street and Latrobe Youth Space: Local Learning Employment Network: 95 participants
- ◆ Parents/ Carers – Information sessions: 62 participants



Networks/Events:

4782 Community engagements

- Community based workshops
- Mid Summa Fest
- Orange Round
- Women on Farms
- Kids As Catalysts
- NAIDOC Week events
- Possum Skin cloak
- Winter Festival
- Rainbow Brick Road Consultations
- RU Ok Day
- Mental Health Week School based activities
- Wellbeing Day
- Book launch
- Walk for Equality
- Yarram Community Walk
- Baw Baw BBQ 16 Days
- Big Respect
- CMY culture club
- Gippsland Day out
- Djirra Sisters Day out – First Nations women
- Candle Light Vigil Cowes & Traralgon
- Bairnsdale Skate Park competition
- Sexual Reproductive Health Forum
- Pride Cup
- Latrobe Liquor Accord (education session)
- Korumburra Community meeting – Family Violence