



We Are Survivors!

Support for young survivors of sexual violence from culturally & linguistically diverse, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds



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FOREWORD

ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Congratulations on finding this information, it is the first step in your journey towards recovery and healing from sexual assault and it is worth celebrating that you found your way here! The aim of this Guide is to help you in your first steps for reaching out to find the help and support you need and to give you hope that healing and recovery from the trauma of sexual violence are possible!

If you have been subjected to sexual assault or other forms of sexual violence you have probably had to face, and may still be facing, a lot of seemingly insurmountable challenges. It is possible that you are experiencing physical effects from the sexual assault and don't know where or how to get the help you need. You may also be experiencing feelings of shame and guilt which may be impacting on your sense of worth as a person and your place in society. You might be dealing with mental health issues as a result of all that you are having to cope with. There is no doubt that the trauma of sexual violence is one of the most difficult life experiences a young person can go through. The effects of the trauma can be potentially devastating, and without help and support, they can last a lifetime.

If you are a survivor from a migrant or refugee background, including if you are a temporary visa holder, the challenges and obstacles can seem overwhelming. If English isn't your first language you might be asking yourself "Where do I even begin?" The Australian culture might seem strange and unfamiliar and sadly, you may have even experienced racism and xenophobia from some members of the community. It may also be that in your culture sexual assault is considered shameful and not to be talked about. You may be fearful that talking about what has happened to you will bring shame upon you and even your family. Feelings of shame can leave you feeling isolated from family, friends and the community and wondering how to find the path forward.

However, it is important to know that what has happened to you is not your fault. You have nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about, and there are many, many people who can, and want, to help you. There are certainly a lot of issues you are contending with, but the information in this Guide has been produced to give you hope and to help you in your first steps towards healing from sexual assault.

We commend you for your bravery, strength and resilience!

CONTENT WARNING

The content addressed in this Guide and other *We Are Survivors!* Guides addresses the topic of sexual violence and may be emotionally distressing and/or triggering to readers. It is recommended that all readers prepare emotionally beforehand.

If you are a survivor of sexual violence you may choose to read this Guide with the support of a trusted support person and/or professional.

If you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape, please allow this Guide to speak directly to you. If you need to take a break from reading this Guide, please feel free to put it down and pick it up at a later time when you are ready again to start reading.

If you would like additional support, a list of support services is provided at the end of this Guide.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms “sexual assault”, “sexual abuse”, “sexual violence”, “sexual exploitation” and “sexual crime” all refer to criminal behaviour that is sexual in nature and the terms are used interchangeably through this series of Guides. Similarly, the terms “victim” and “survivor” are used interchangeably in this Guide (and all Guides in this series) in recognition that sexual assault including sexual exploitation is a victimising crime (i.e., there is a “victim” of the crime) and that those who survive the crime are indeed “survivors” just to have survived. The term victim is also used to honour those who unfortunately did not survive the crime and are no longer with us as a result.

The *We Are Survivors!* Guides have been developed to help and support everyone from all backgrounds and circumstances in their survivor journey.

OTHER GUIDES IN THE WE ARE SURVIVORS! SERIES

Other Guides in the We Are Survivors! Series include

We Are Survivors: Support for Adults Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for LGBTIQ+ Survivors of Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Female Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

We Are Survivors: Support for Survivors of Sexual Violence in Conflict

We Are Survivors: Support for Parents and Carers of Children from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds Who Have Been Sexually Abused

We Are Survivors: A Guide for Professionals Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence from CALD, Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds

Go to www.wearesurvivors.online for more information and resources.

MESSAGES OF HOPE FROM OTHER YOUNG SURVIVORS

Dear Fellow Survivor,

I know there is not much I can say to make everything you are feeling go away, and that's okay.

I want you to know I am so proud of you and how far you have come.

I want you to know that what happened to you was not your fault.

No one deserves to experience what you went through, and you've shown such strength in seeking the help that you need and most importantly deserve. How you feel - whether you're angry, broken, confused or anything else— is valid. It takes an unspeakable amount of resilience and strength to endure what you have and to keep moving forward, it is important to acknowledge that strength within you. The evil that happened to you cannot be justified, explained away or excused. What that person did to you has nothing to do with your smile or your personality and it was absolutely not your fault.

Healing is not always straightforward, and it's okay to undergo a journey that looks different to someone else's. You don't have to feel pressured to recover quickly. When I was your age I believed that this one thing that happened to me was the definition of who I was and would be forever, but that is not true. What happened to you is a big part of your story but not who you are. You have ambitions, talents, passions and a future that is yours to shape. Even when it feels impossible, healing will come. Believe me. It's okay to take things slow, and it's okay to feel like you need time.

For me, some days were longer or harder than others, but little did I know the greatness ahead of me. You too will do great things - you can and will change the world! You are stronger than ever simply because of this, and you deserve all the love and light that the world can offer. You are never alone in your journey from grief to healing, and you will rise from this, in your own time, and in your own way.

Remember, you are more than what happened to you. You are not alone. You are loved, you are valuable, and you are more powerful in ways you may not even be able to imagine!

Love,

Savanna (17 Years Old)

Dear Fellow Survivor,

I know what you are going through is extremely difficult and at times the pain probably feels unending. I am a thirteen-year-old boy, and if I was able to get through the pain of sexual abuse, I know you can get through it as well. I am so glad that you have got this far to find my message to you.

Sexual abuse is wrong. No one, no body, and no soul should ever have to go through sexual abuse. No-one should ever have to fight the battle that you have had to fight to get here. But you have made it this far and I know you can keep going to find healing.

I know it would have taken a lot of courage for you to carry on with life after the sexual abuse. Like me, you might have put on a tough face just to get through it. You might still be putting on a tough face. But please know it is ok to ask for help. There are people who understand and who can help.

I want you to know that the sexual abuse was not your fault. Never was, and never will be.

It took me five months to begin to recover from my experience of pure pain. After suffering what I did I felt sure that it would leave a scar in my heart forever. But I want you to know that as painful as it can be, you can heal from sexual abuse and you can grow from it to become a stronger person.

You have so much potential and even though it might not feel like it some days, you hold a bright future in your hands. Don't give up because you will find a talent, a friend, or another special gift that will carry you through the difficult times to that bright future that is waiting for you.

Live your life to the fullest, enjoy being around the ones you love, enjoy being outside, enjoy the one in a billion positive life experiences that are waiting for you.

And don't forget just how strong you are and what you have already overcome to get this far!

You have got incredible power within you: you are a Survivor.

Take Care,

Alexander (13 years old)

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS “SEXUAL VIOLENCE”?

“Sexual violence” refers to a variety of sexual behaviours and activities that include the use of force, coercion, or manipulation to obtain power and control over another person sexually. It can include sexual assault and other forms of sexual abuse such as online sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking.

WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual assault involves the abuse of power, strength and/or authority, where one person takes advantage of their position of authority or influence over another person to engage another person in sexual activity. Sexual assault describes any unwelcome sexual action or contact that takes place without the agreement of all the persons involved.

Sexual assault may happen in close relationships, families, and in other places such as in sports or other clubs, schools and other institutions, and in public spaces.

Sexual assault can have serious, long-lasting negative effects on the victim’s physical, emotional, and mental health.

Sexual assault is a crime and a serious human rights violation.

WHAT IS “CONSENT”?

Giving consent (permission or agreement) is an essential part of all sexual relationships. When one person has sexual relations with another person without that person’s free and informed consent, it is called sexual assault. A person’s consent must be continuous and ongoing, which means that people are free to change their minds at any time during sexual activity. If a person keeps going in the sexual activity after the other person has stopped giving their consent it is sexual assault.

AGE MATTERS

The minimum age at which a person is regarded as legally mature enough or capable to consent to sexual conduct is called the “legal age of consent.”

In New South Wales (NSW), Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, and Victoria, the legal age of consent is sixteen years. This means that, as long as there is no force or exploitation involved, people 16 years of age and older are regarded as legally capable of giving their consent to engage in sexual contact with another person. Like the majority of other Australian states and territories, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory has a 16-year-old consent age.

In South Australia, the legal age of consent is also 16 years old except for situations where the older person has authority or trust over the younger person, for example, in a teacher-student relationship. The age of consent in those situations is 17 years. In NSW the age of consent under those circumstances is 18 years.

Having sex with someone who isn't old enough to give consent is illegal and is known as *statutory rape* or *unlawful sexual intercourse*, even if the younger person seems to be giving consent.

In certain situations, such as when there is little or even no age difference, some sexual relationships may still be considered illegal, for example, if there is power imbalance between the young people involved. For example, if two people are the same age but if one person has a severe intellectual disability and does not understand what is happening and they may not be able to truly consent to the sexual activity.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 16 CANNOT CONSENT

Legally, people under the age of 16 years cannot properly give informed consent because of their limited life experience and knowledge, which prevents them from fully understanding the sexual activity and its ramifications. Under normal conditions, children and young people can find it extremely difficult to say "no" to adults and this difficulty increases when they are confused, afraid, or are being tricked, bribed, or coerced. So, even if the child or young person didn't say "no", if they are under 16 years of age, it is still sexual abuse.

Sexual assault of children and young people is never ok.

TYPES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

There are a number of different types of sexual assault. Some of these include *rape*, which refers to forced sexual penetration, frequently through oral, anal, or vaginal sex.

Coercing (or pressuring or manipulating) someone into engaging in sexual activity against their will is known as *sexual coercion* and is also a form of sexual assault.

Forced, coerced or manipulated sexual activity within the context of a date is sometimes referred to as "*date rape*".

Unwanted touching or fondling refers to situations when someone touches a private area of the victim's body without their consent / permission. This may also be referred to as *indecent assault*.

Sexual harassment refers to unwanted sexual advances, remarks, or actions.

Child sexual abuse refers to situations in which a person uses his or her authority or position to engage a child in sexual activity. It usually refers to situations where an adult, adolescent or child uses their position, trust or power to take advantage of a child for their own sexual gratification.

Sexual assault also includes situations when someone is incapable of providing informed consent because they are too young, intoxicated, unconscious, or otherwise incapacitated.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence there are people who can help.

ONLINE SEXUAL ABUSE

Online sexual abuse is the use of digital communication platforms or the internet for the exploitation, coercion, harassment, or grooming of children and/or young people for sexual purposes. It may be perpetrated by adults or other young people who have the intention of abusing or sexually abusing the other person.

Some common examples of online sexual abuse include:

Grooming

Grooming refers to situations where the perpetrator gradually establishes an emotional and trusting relationship with the child or young person with the goal of sexually abusing them.

Social media, messaging apps, online gaming sites, and other digital platforms can be used by offenders to build rapport with potential victims, trick or pressure them into having sex, or convince them to post graphic photos or videos.

Sextortion

Sextortion occurs when the perpetrator forces or manipulates the victim by threats of exposure, humiliation, or physical harm—to provide sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves. They might say “If you don’t do what I tell you to do I am going to share the nude photos you gave me with your parents and your school”.

Online Sexual Bullying and Harassment

Perpetrators can use social media, online forums, or messaging applications, to send sexually explicit comments or photos, unwelcome advances, or threats of sexual violence. Online sexual bullying and harassment can result in significant psychological and emotional suffering for the victims.

Distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)

Sharing photographs or videos showing the sexual exploitation or abuse of children and young people are also examples of online sexual abuse.

Sexual Solicitation

Sometimes adults pose as children or young people to trick victims into believing they are communicating with someone their own age or in their own age group. When perpetrators do this they gain the victim’s trust and eventually ask them to engage in sexual activities. Offenders can use chat rooms, dating apps, or social media sites to do this.

Online Enticement

Sometimes perpetrators will attempt to lure children or young people into meeting them in person for sex. They might have gained the trust of the child or young person by pretending to be a “good friend”, or they may have used other tricks and forms of manipulation, such as offering them money to meet with them in person.

Production of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)

The production of child pornography is another form of online sexual abuse and occurs when offenders threaten, manipulate, pressure, or force a child or young person into creating sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves.

It is important to be aware that if you are under the age of 18 and you send nude or sexually explicit photos of yourself electronically, such as via SMS or social media messaging services, you can be charged with offences related to production of CSAM under NSW and Commonwealth laws.

If you have experienced online sexual abuse you are not alone and there are people who can help you.

TYPES OF GROOMING

“Grooming” refers to situations where offenders target children and young people using a range of strategies to trick them into sexual activities. The strategies that offenders use can be very sophisticated. Sometimes it can be hard to recognise grooming when it is happening because the techniques are so sophisticated, so it is important to be aware of them to spot them early on.

Online Grooming occurs when an offender lures a young person into a “relationship” via the internet. Even though the young person may never meet the perpetrator, they may build an online friendship or romantic relationship with them. The offender may trick or manipulate the young person to

Grooming by acquaintances, friends or boyfriends can happen when a friend or acquaintance introduces another young person to the offender (or groups of offenders) with the aim of sexually abusing them. The offender might offer gifts, rides in cars, or other forms of attention to the young person and their friends who they want to recruit and eventually sexually abuse.

Sometimes the offender might be pretending to be their boyfriend or girlfriend by giving them presents, affection, and a “loving relationship” and eventually manipulating or coercing them into sexual activities with other people.

Sometimes young people are invited to parties or other gatherings where they are offered alcohol and other drugs with the aim of involving them in sexual activity that they otherwise would not do.

If you have experienced grooming or are worried someone might be trying to groom you or someone you know there are people who can help you.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The act of exploiting another person by making them perform sexual services for money or other gain is known as *commercial sexual exploitation*. It usually involves the offender using force, manipulation, coercion or deception to engage the young person into sexual activity in exchange for money or other things. Sexual exploitation can occur in person or online.

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is illegal in Australia. If you have been or are being sexually exploited there are people who can help you.

HOW COMMON IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

It is difficult to obtain exact information the prevalence of sexual violence committed against young people due to the fact that many victims of sexual crime don't report it. Many young people do not report what has happened to them due to feelings of shame, fear, distrust of the police or other authorities and/or the legal system. There can be differences in definitions, cultural beliefs and practices, as well as differences in data collection methods, all of which can make it difficult to know the exact numbers of people who experience sexual violence.

It is generally estimated that about one in three girls and one in seven boys will experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18 years, but it is most likely that reported figures reflect only a small proportion of the true prevalence of sexual violence against children and young people.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Sexual activity between a child or young person and an adult is unsafe and illegal because of the power difference between adults and children and young people.
- Children and young people are never in a position to give informed consent to sexual activity with an adult. Even if the child or young person didn't say no, or even if they said yes, any sexual activity between an adult and a child or young person is still sexual abuse and a crime.
- The perpetrator is always responsible for the abuse.
- Sexual assault happens to both males and females.
- Children and young people of all ages – from babies to teenagers, are vulnerable to sexual abuse.
- Sexual abuse and sexual assault occur in all types of families, regardless of where they live, if they are rich or poor, and regardless of their education level.
- Sexual abuse and sexual assault happen in all countries, cultures and religions.
- All forms of sexual assault are harmful.

- Sexual abuse may occur once or many times. It can happen over a period of months or years.
- Perpetrators can include family members, friends, acquaintances or strangers. However, children and young people are most likely to be sexually abused by someone they know.
- The majority of perpetrators are male. However, sexual assault can be committed by females and is just as harmful.

All children and young people are vulnerable to sexual abuse and all deserve to be protected. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual abuse there are people who can help.

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

Research from around the world shows that most sexual assault is committed by someone the victim (female or male) knows and should be able to trust. Offenders can include members of the victim/survivor's extended family, such a grandfather, uncle, brother-in-law, or cousin, or members of their immediate family, like a father, stepfather, or brother. The victim/survivor may also know the offender through other ways, such as being a family friend, neighbour, teacher, or youth worker.

While the majority of offenders are male it is important to know that some women commit sexual abuse and offenders can also include grandmothers, aunts, mothers, female teachers, etc.

Offenders can also include boyfriends or girlfriends, dates, friends or acquaintances.

No matter who does it, the offender is always to blame.

QUESTIONS YOUNG SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE MIGHT ASK

There are many questions that young people who have been subjected to sexual assault might ask themselves in the immediate aftermath of the assault or in the time afterwards. If you have been sexually assaulted, abused or exploited, it is crucial to your healing journey and recovery to know that it is very normal to ask these questions. You also need to know that what happened to you was not your fault, you have nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about, and that while it takes time, healing and recovery from sexual assault are possible.

If you have experienced sexual violence, you might be asking yourself some or all of these questions:

“Why did it happen to me?”

Many young people who have been subjected to sexual assault think that they must have done something wrong for the offender to have targeted them. Becoming the victim of a crime, particularly an assault, can be an extremely confusing experience. The fact that sexual assault is not openly talked about in most societies can make matters even more confusing. For example, you might wonder “Was I too friendly?”, “Was it the clothes I was wearing?”, “Was I in the wrong place?”.

While these questions are normal it is essential to remember that, regardless of the circumstances, sexual violence is not actually about the victim, it is about the misuse of power and authority by the perpetrator.

Sexual assault is never ok and it is never the victim's fault.

“Why do I feel so alone?”

The fact that sexual assault is not talked about openly in most societies can lead to victims feeling alone and isolated, believing they are the only ones who have experienced this kind of abuse. Emotions of guilt and embarrassment can keep them from talking about their experiences and therefore prevent them from being reassured that they are not alone and that there are people who can help them.

If you were abused sexually, even though you might feel alone, it is important to know you are not. There are many other children, young people and adults who have been subjected to sexual assault, and there are people you can talk to and who will understand what you are going through.

“What if I was sexually assaulted by someone I know?”

You might have experienced a wide range of emotions if you were the victim of sexual violence by a person you know. The betrayal of the perpetrator may have left you feeling extremely confused. It is possible that you felt “dirty,” humiliated, or embarrassed about having sexual behaviour forced on you. It can be even more difficult if the abuser was a member of your own family because you may have loved them but wanted the sexual abuse to stop.

It is possible that you were scared that no one would believe you if you told them about the sexual abuse, that you would somehow be blamed for the abuse, or that people would assume the sexual abuse was your fault if you didn’t say “no”. All of these emotions and worries are very normal. But it is important to remember that you are not alone, you have done nothing wrong, and you have no reason to feel guilty or ashamed.

In all cases of sexual assault, the offender is responsible for what happened.

“If I talk to a teacher or someone else like my teacher, doctor or a counsellor, will they have to report it to the authorities?”

In NSW (and many other states and territories), mandatory reporting laws require professionals like teachers and doctors to report the abuse of children and young people under 18 years of age who are at significant risk of being harmed. If you talk to someone like your teacher, doctor or a counsellor, they may have to report to the authorities such as Child Protection or the police. But this isn’t because you have done anything wrong, it is because it is their job is to make sure you’re safe.

You have the right to be safe, and mandatory reporting laws have been designed to specifically to protect you and other young people who are in unsafe situations. If you talk to an adult who is required to report sexual abuse, they will work with you to find the best way forward for you to be safe, and the authorities will also work with you to find the best solution for your situation.

You don’t have to go through this alone. You can talk to someone you trust and they’ll help guide you through what to do next. Whether it’s your teacher, doctor, school counsellor, another trusted adult, or even a helpline, you don’t have to handle it alone, there are people will listen and who want to help you.

“Will I be taken away from my family or put into foster care if I tell an adult about the sexual abuse?”

It is totally understandable to be afraid to tell an adult if you have experienced sexual abuse, especially if the offender was someone from or close to your family. You might be worried about being taken away from your family, maybe even being put into foster care. It is really important to know that authorities usually try to keep young people with their families or close to people they trust. Their main goal is to stop the abuse and make sure you're safe and foster care is only considered if there's no other way to protect you.

“What if I was sexually assaulted by someone I don't know?”

It can be just as confusing and traumatising to be sexually abused by a stranger. If you experienced sexual assault by a person you don't know (that is, a “stranger”), you may have been reluctant to tell anyone for fear that you wouldn't be taken seriously or that you would somehow be blamed for what happened. You may not even know or remember their details or appearance well enough to feel that you can report the crime to police or anyone else. If you were unable to tell the abuser “no,” if you were unable to get away or resist the attack physically, if you were blamed for the abuse when you did tell someone, it can make you feel even worse.

No matter who does it - male or female, family, friend or stranger - sexual assault is against the law and is a serious crime.

It is important to remember that what happened to you was not your fault. You have nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about and there are people who can help you.

“Is it sexual assault if a husband or wife forces their husband or wife to have sex?”

If a husband or wife forces their spouse to have sex against their will it is sexual assault. People in married relationships need to have consent from one another before having sex. People have the right to say “no” to any sexual activity at any moment, even while they are married, and consent must be continuous and ongoing. That means, just because you consented to sexual activity on one occasion it does not mean you consent to it on every other occasion following.

Any use of force, manipulation, or intimidation to obtain sex is wrong, and consent can never be assumed or coerced, even in marriage.

Marriage and Young People

In Australia, it is against the law to force someone into marriage, especially marrying someone under the age of 18 years, without their permission.

The legal age to get married without your parents' permission is 18 years. It is legal for anyone who is 18 years of age or older to get married without parental or guardian consent. In Australia, marriages between people under the age of 16 years are often illegal. However, under some extraordinary circumstances, such as customs from a particular culture or religion, a judge or magistrate may approve a marriage involving a minor.

It is illegal in Australia to force someone into an arranged marriage.

If you are concerned about forced marriage or you have questions about it, there are people and organisations that can help, such as My Blue Sky.

See the end of this Guide for a list of other helpful organisations.

“Is it sexual assault if I wasn’t forced but I felt pressured to?”

If one partner feels forced or pressured into performing a sexual act and is not free to refuse, it is sexual assault. Consent should always be informed and given freely and just because one person doesn’t verbally say “no” it doesn’t mean they freely consented, especially if they felt unable to freely communicate their desires or boundaries because of fear, manipulation, and/or power differences. A person must say or do something to communicate consent.

For more information on NSW Consent laws, please see <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/sexual-violence/sexual-consent.html>

“What if the offender was a female?”

Sexual assault is a crime that can be committed by a person of any gender, including women. Sexual assault is about the breach of personal boundaries and consent; it is not influenced by the gender of either the victim or the perpetrator. Sexual assault committed by female perpetrators causes just as much suffering as sexual abuse perpetrated by male perpetrators. Whether the victim is male or female, and regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, sexual assault is about the abuse of the victim’s trust and the misuse of power by the offender.

If you are a male or female who has been sexually abused or raped by a female, please be aware that the perpetrator committed a serious crime against you. There are people who will understand what you are going through and who can help you.

“Was it my fault?”

If you have experienced sexual violence, you might have blamed yourself for the abuse, particularly if the abuser told you it was your fault, if you were unable to say “no” to the offender, if you were unable to flee the abuser, or if the perpetrator used coercion or other tricks to gain your compliance or trust.

It is important to remember that, no matter what, you were not to blame for the sexual assault. The perpetrator bears full responsibility for the abuse.

Recognising that you were not to blame for the abuse is a significant step towards recovery even though you might need to hear this many times from many different sources before you believe it and can start truly healing.

If you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape, please allow this Guide to speak directly to you. Many survivors have reported saying mantras to themselves to be very helpful. One survivor found the following mantra to be very helpful and suggested that repeating it out loud to yourself might be helpful for you too:

The sexual assault was not my fault.

The sexual assault was not my fault.

The sexual assault was not my fault.

If you need to take a break from reading this Guide, please feel free to put it down and pick it up at a later time when you are ready again to start reading.

“Why do I feel ashamed about what has happened to me?”

Shame is another very common effect of sexual assault for many survivors. This is due, in part, to the taboo and secrecy surrounding sexual assault. Many adult victims of sexual violence find it awkward to discuss because it involves both sexual activity and the intimate areas of the body. Because of this, people who experience sexual assault often believe that something “dirty” has happened to them and that they are somehow “dirty” as a result. This is a very common response, especially if your culture places great value on sexual purity or virginity before marriage, as you may feel that you are “damaged goods” and no-one will want to date or marry you in the future.

However, it is important to remind yourself that you haven’t done anything wrong and have nothing to feel guilty, embarrassed or ashamed about. In fact, you can feel strong and courageous that you survived the experience.

“Will my family’s application for asylum or residency be refused if I tell an adult about the sexual abuse? I am scared we will be deported”.

It is understandable if you feel scared about telling an adult about what has happened to you, especially if you’re worried it could affect your family’s visa situation or immigration status. It’s okay to feel this way. Your safety and well-being are really important, and so is keeping your family together. In Australia, everyone, including refugees and asylum seekers, has the right to safety and protection from abuse. You have the right to be safe and protected from abuse, no matter what your immigration status is.

Australia has laws that specifically protect people from deportation because they report crimes, including sexual abuse. There are people you can talk to who understand your situation as a refugee or asylum seeker. They can give you advice and help you feel safe without risking your family’s application.

If you are in this situation, it is important to reach out to organisations such as **IARC** and **STARTTS** who can help you without automatically triggering legal or immigration actions.

Please see the end of this guide to find out how to contact IARC, STARTTS and other specialist services that can help you.

You don’t have to go through this alone.

COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA AND THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Everybody's experience of sexual violence is different. If you have been sexually assaulted the experience may have an impact on your thoughts, feelings, actions, relationships, as well as on how you see the world.

SOME COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Your response to the trauma of sexual violence will be unique to you. It is possible that you will have some intense physical, psychological and/or emotional reactions. Your reactions might be immediate or they might take a while to happen. They might also suddenly emerge at unexpected (and inconvenient) times. Every person is different and there is no right or wrong way to react or not react to the trauma of sexual violence.

Always remember, even if it takes some time, hope, healing and recovery are possible.

Some of the physical reactions to trauma are listed below, as well as some of the common thoughts, feelings and behaviours that might occur in response to the trauma of sexual assault. Many of these reactions have been taken from the "SARC – Care Package for Survivors" and the details about this invaluable resource for survivors can be found at the end of this Guide).

Physical

Constipation Diarrhoea Dry mouth Exhaustion Feeling dizzy Headaches Loss of appetite

Muscle tension Other pains Rapid heartbeat Sweating Tight chest

Thoughts

Confusion Difficulty concentrating Flashbacks Intrusive memories Nightmares Poor memory "It was my fault" "I should have done more" "I'm going crazy" "I'll never be the same" "Nobody will ever love me now"

Feelings Hopelessness Fear Isolation/ Wanting to be Alone Angry Anxious

Alienated Ashamed Detached Depressed Emptiness Guilty Hurt

Inadequate Insecure Irritable No confidence Numb Self-blame Shame

Even though they might be strong, they might even feel overwhelming at times, emotions cannot kill you. They are inside you and they are smaller than you. It is possible to recover control over your life and prevent the bad emotions from taking over. To do that, you will need to deal with your emotions and worries. A trusted person can help you to do this.

Behaviours

Avoiding people/places Being impulsive Changes to eating Drinking/smoking Easily startled

Lack of interest in things Nail-biting Neglecting care of yourself Self-harming Socially withdrawing Very alert / hyper-vigilant

Changes in behaviour are a common response to trauma. While it is quite normal, it can be very helpful to understand the feelings and ideas that may be leading to your actions.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

The range of emotions and behaviours that people may experience following a traumatic event is sometimes referred to as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). Young people who have been subjected to sexual assault, abuse or exploitation may experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress which can include:

- Distressing flashbacks, nightmares, and persistent and/or intrusive memories of the incident
- Not wanting to talk about the painful incident and avoiding people, places, and activities that might bring the trauma back to mind
- Being so “on edge” that it interferes with your ability to focus and fall asleep
- Being constantly on edge, aware and/or “hyper-vigilant”
- Taking more and/or greater risks than normal
- Being hyper-critical of yourself
- Feeling “cut off” from others around you
- Having intense emotions and ideas that you can’t seem to control or stop
- Losing interest in routine activities

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEX AND INTIMACY

Your beliefs and attitudes around sex may have changed as a result of the sexual assault. It is important to critically examine the beliefs you have developed and to remind yourself that healthy sex is not involved in sexual trauma; abusive sex is and sex is not always abusive.

Unhealthy sexual attitudes and beliefs that can come about as a result of abuse

- Sex is unsafe
- Sex is about satisfying one person
- Sex is addictive
- Sex is uncontrollable
- Sex is essential to be loved

Healthy sex attitudes and beliefs

- Sex is a choice
- Sex is respectful
- Sex is about sharing
- Sex is private
- Sex is safe and intimate

WHY DON'T VICTIMS/SURVIVORS TELL?

If you have been sexually assaulted you may be reluctant to tell anyone about what has happened to you for a variety of reasons.

THREATS FROM THE PERPETRATOR

You might have been threatened to keep the sexual assault a secret. Sexual assault is an extremely frightening and sometimes life-threatening crime and any threats made by the perpetrator are usually taken very seriously. It makes sense that you would have kept the abuse to yourself if the perpetrator threatened to harm you or a loved one if you told anybody.

Remember, the abuse you endured was the fault of the perpetrator only; you were not to blame in any way, even if you kept the abuse a secret. It is never too late to tell someone you trust and to get the help and support you deserve.

FEAR OF NOT BEING BELIEVED

Many young people are afraid that no one will believe them if they disclose that they have experienced sexual violence. The pain of the abuse itself is made even worse when others, particularly those within the survivor's own family, don't believe them.

If you told someone about the sexual violence you experienced and they didn't believe you, it might have destroyed your confidence and your trust in people. Maybe you made the decision to never tell anyone again. However, it is important to remember that there are trusted, kind people including professional counsellors who will support and believe you if you choose to talk about what has happened to you.

It is never too late to begin to tell and begin the process of healing from sexual violence.

FEAR OF BEING BLAMED FOR THE ABUSE

Self-blame is a common response to sexual assault experienced by many survivors, including young people. Survivors may ask themselves what it was about them that attracted the criminal to target them. If they were unable to say "no", run away, or physically resist the perpetrator, they might blame themselves for the abuse. This can be made worse if you are worried that other people might also blame you for what happened.

Remember, if you have experienced sexual abuse, you are not to blame. You haven't done anything wrong, and there is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about. The perpetrator alone is responsible for the abuse.

There are people who will not blame you and who can help you.

FEAR OF HOW OTHER PEOPLE WILL REACT

The way society responds to victims of sexual assault can vary greatly. Some people provide victims of sexual assault with sympathy, compassion, and support. Sadly, victim-blaming is a common but extremely negative social response to sexual violence. As a result of the shame and stigma, victims of sexual violence may feel isolated and believe that the sexual assault was their fault. Some children and young people are met with doubt or disbelief when they

disclose sexual assault and some are even silenced. For example, they might get a response like “Well, that is what happens when you go out at night” which implies that they are somehow responsible for the abuse.

Any of these negative responses can be a devastating experience and might make you not want to talk about what has happened to you. If you received a negative or unhelpful response when you told someone about the abuse, remind yourself that what happened was not your fault – *you deserve to be believed, listened to, protected and cared for.*

Don't give up, there are people who will believe you and who want to help you.

FEAR OF BEING LABELLED HOMOSEXUAL / GAY

If the crime was committed by a person of the same gender, survivors of sexual violence may be particularly reluctant to disclose what has happened to them to others for fear that their experience will make them homosexual or “gay”. This fear is especially damaging in environments where homosexuality is stigmatised, even vilified. However, it is important to know that a person's sexual orientation is unrelated to sexual crime. Sexual assault is about the perpetrator's decision to use sex as a means of exerting dominance and control over another person.

If you experienced sexual violence by somebody of the same gender, the assault did not occur because you are homosexual, nor will it lead to your becoming homosexual. If you are worried about these issues, it may be helpful to speak with a qualified and experienced counsellor to get support and assurance on this issue.

A list of organisations that can help are provided at the end of this Guide.

“THIS IS OUR SECRET”

In order to make sure they are not discovered, abusers might have told you to keep the abuse a secret. If you experienced sexual abuse and were told to keep it a secret, it is important to remind yourself that you did nothing wrong and it is never too late to tell.

It is never too late to tell a trustworthy person, especially if the abuse is still having an effect on your life and for you to get the help and support you deserve.

FEAR OF NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON YOUR OR YOUR FAMILY'S VISA STATUS

Many young survivors of sexual violence from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds are afraid to talk to the police or other authorities if they have been subjected to sexual assault because they are concerned that it might have a negative impact on their or their family's visa application/status. If you are reluctant to report sexual assault for this reason it is important to discuss your situation with a specialist legal service. All victims of crime, including survivors of sexual violence, have rights and safeguards. There are a number of organisations and agencies that can help you and help to protect you and your loved ones.

See the end of this Guide for a list of specialist organisations that can help.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SURVIVORS TELL?

When you tell someone you have been sexually assaulted, the response you receive can make a big difference.

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

It's possible that experiencing sexual assault was made even more painful if you informed someone about it and received a negative response. You might have decided never to talk to anyone about what happened to you again or you find it difficult to trust people as a result of your negative experience.

You should have been believed and you deserved to be protected.

While it is understandable that your sense of trust has been damaged, it is important to know that, if you decide to talk to someone about what happened to you, there are people who will believe you and who will support you.

POSITIVE RESPONSES

Positive responses can help you begin to heal and it is possible to find a safe person to talk to.

A safe person is someone who

- is likely to believe you
- cares about you
- will want to help you, and
- will respect your privacy.

Some people can confide in a member of their own family. Sadly, this isn't always possible for other people. Speaking with a counsellor or therapist can help some people. If the first person you speak with doesn't react in a helpful or positive way, remember that you have not done anything wrong. Find someone else to talk with – don't give up!

GETTING HELP

In order to get the support and assistance you are entitled to, it can be helpful to talk with someone you can trust. It could be your best friend, your spouse, your boyfriend or girlfriend, a close and trustworthy relative, or a counsellor. You have the freedom to choose who you would like to speak with.

One of the main reasons to tell a trustworthy friend or family member about your experience is to relieve yourself of the burden of carrying the secret, to regain your personal power and to be reassured *that you are not to blame for what happened to you.*

Some survivors may be very nervous reticent about seeing a counsellor because they feel that if the counsellor ends up not being the 'right match' for them and speaking to that person will have been a waste of time. However, some survivors meet up with a few different counsellors at the beginning until they find the right person for them.

When you read the list of agencies and organisations at the end of this Guide, and if you call one of the numbers provided, you can request what kind of counsellor you would prefer to meet with, including if they are male or female.

Your voice and opinion are important and you can let people know who you feel you will most comfortable talking with.

WHAT CAN HELP SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

1. To be believed
2. To be understood
3. To be told "This was not your fault"
4. To have a safe and confidential environment where the survivor can speak openly about his or her feelings
5. To have his or her value as a person reinforced
6. To be reassured that they do not carry the shame of the sexual abuse
7. To build or re-build their self-esteem
8. To get back in contact with his or her feelings
9. To speak out the truth of their lives

WHO CAN HELP ME?

If you decide to tell someone about what has happened to you, it is important to find a safe person to talk to. Speaking with a trusted best friend or close family member can be comforting for some survivors of sexual assault. Speaking with a counsellor or therapist can help some people. Some people discover that they can safely confide in a member of their own family. Sadly, this isn't always possible for other people for many reasons, including the information not being kept confidential and possibly reaching the ears of the perpetrator which can be an unsafe

situation for the survivor. In this case, talking to a professional counsellor can be another option. Sometimes finding the 'right' person can take time and a few different attempts.

If the first person you speak with doesn't react in a helpful or positive way, remember that you have not done anything wrong. Find someone else to talk with and above all – don't give up!

WHAT CAN HELP?

Create Safety

Being and feeling safe is essential for recovery from sexual assault.

In order to find out if you are *feeling safe*, you might want to ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I safe from further contact with the offender including physically, on social media, etc?
- Do I feel safe at home?
- Is there anything I need to change in order to feel and be safe?

To begin the healing process, you will need to establish your safety and sense of safety as a *first priority*. If you are currently at risk of violence of any kind, get help to find safety including staying at a trusted friend or family's members house or accessing a domestic violence refuge shelter. If you are not safe and/or are not feeling safe, it is important to work out what you need to do to be safe. Talking to someone and getting help and support to put safety measures in place for yourself is essential as you may not be able to do this by yourself.

A list of support services is provided at the end of this Guide including 24/7 confidential crisis counselling numbers that can help if you ever find yourself needing immediate help.

Be Kind to Yourself

In order to begin to heal from the trauma of sexual violence, you need to be able to be compassionate and kind towards yourself. This can be difficult if there is any part of yourself that blames yourself for what happened.

One way to overcome this and be able to be kind to yourself is to think about someone who has been kind to you in the past and imagine having this compassion and care for yourself. What would a caring friend say to you? What kind messages would a kind and caring friend give? Give these same messages to yourself. If you are still struggling to be compassionate towards yourself, imagine hearing from another innocent person who has gone through what you have gone through and is now struggling with the feelings and effects that you are experiencing. In what ways would you show them kindness? What words would you say to help them? Do these things and say these things to yourself. Give this compassion and kindness to yourself in some way every day.

One survivor recommends putting two chairs side by side together in a room that you feel safe in, sit in one chair and talk to the empty chair as if you are talking to a sexual assault or rape victim, helping them through their healing journey.

Talk to Someone You Trust

Speaking with someone who is sympathetic, understanding, and helpful is one of the best ways to begin healing from the trauma of sexual violence. This might be a trusted friend or relative, or it could be a trauma-specialist expert.

For many survivors, speaking with a professional counsellor in addition to friends and family can be extremely beneficial.

When choosing who to talk with, consider whether they will:

- Respect your privacy
- Listen to you without blaming you
- Be supportive
- Let you make the final decision

Some people find it challenging to discuss their experiences with people they know. Speaking with a qualified counsellor can be a crucial step in the recovery process. Counsellors with expertise in sexual assault trauma are trained to recognise and assist with the many effects of trauma.

Find and Strengthen Positive Friendships

Developing relationships of trust and compassion with safe, loving people who do not harm others is a crucial aspect of healing from sexual violence. It can take some time to regain trust after suffering sexual abuse. You may feel like you want to withdraw and isolate yourself from people. However, positive and healthy connections and relationships with people can have a profoundly therapeutic and positive effect on you and your life. A safe circle of friends, community and/or family members can take some time to develop for anyone, let alone victims of sexual abuse or rape, whose trust has been severely violated. Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself to slowly build trust.

Do Something You Enjoy Every Day

Every day, try to engage in an activity you enjoy. Taking care of yourself is essential, so schedule time each day for something you enjoy. Make time every day to unwind and prepare larger treats in advance so you always have something to look forward to.

Here are some ideas from the *“SARC – Care Package for Survivors”*:

- Book tickets to a movie, show or sporting event
- Light candles, diffuse essential oils or burn incense
- Read a good book
- Listen to your favourite music
- Plan a camping, snorkelling or hiking trip
- Soak in a warm bath filled with bubbles, bath salts or essential oils
- Go for a picnic
- Swim in the sea or walk on the sand or do both!

- Watch the sunset
- Go for a bike ride
- See a live band
- Have a massage
- Cook your favourite meal
- Meet a friend for coffee and maybe cake!
- Spend time in the garden and buy or pick fresh flowers

Here are some of the methods other survivors have found helpful:

Painting and other forms of art therapy

Music

Dance

Drama

Physical activity or sports, such as self-defence, martial arts

Writing and / or reading poetry

Writing a diary

Other forms of creative writing and expression

Spiritual healing

Reading about other people's experiences

Joining a group of other young survivors

Talking to a trusted friend or relative

Talking to a counsellor

Reporting the abuse to the Police

Seeking justice

Helping others who have been abused

Spending time with animals

Become Active for Positive Change

Some survivors find that getting active for change honours the fact that they are survivors and inspires them to advocate for human rights. Making a public statement about sexual assault or child sexual abuse is one way to take

a stand. Taking part in protest marches, signing petitions, participating in survivor forums, and lobbying lawmakers for reform are all ways that survivors can become empowered and can empower others to make positive change in the world.

Seek Cultural Healing

Many people believe that cultural customs and rituals have great healing power. They can strengthen a sense of identity and purpose, nurture a sense of belonging, and facilitate meaningful relationships. They can also provide a safe avenue for self-expression and exploration. Understanding your culture with language, customs, artwork, dancing, storytelling, traditional foods, and medicines can all play an important role in social, emotional, and spiritual recovery and healing from sexual violence.

Establish a Balanced, Healthy Lifestyle

Developing and maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle can be another crucial component of healing and recovery. Important aspects of a balanced and healthy lifestyle can include:

- Making sure you are safe.
- Seeking professional help if needed.
- Limiting your exposure to trauma stories and bad news.
- Informing and educating yourself about trauma and what you are experiencing.
- Managing your stress and anxiety.
- Connecting with others.
- Getting health checks.
- Exercising regularly.
- Challenging your brain.
- Practicing meditation and mindfulness.
- Helping others.
- Expressing gratitude for the good things.
- Having safe physical contact.
- Sleeping well.
- Using positive self-talk.
- Eating a healthy diet.
- Getting sunshine.
- Being creative.

- Laughing often.
- Stimulating your senses daily, such as tasting delicious foods or smelling the aroma of flowers or essential oils.
- Breaking routines, trying new things, and learning new skills.
- Having a sense of purpose in life.

Look for Positives and Actively Practice Gratitude

It can be easy to forget to notice the positives in our lives and the beauty all around us. Regularly practising gratitude is a very simple way to bring more balance and positivity into your life.

Perhaps you can create a gratitude notebook or journal where you can actively acknowledge even the small things in life that you are grateful for. For example:

- First thing each morning write down three things that you are grateful for in your life
- Decorate your gratitude page if you would like to
- Each evening, write down at least three positive things from your day
- When you are having a low day, read back over what you have written
- Try to make this a habit – you will be amazed at the positive difference it makes!

Keep Going

Healing can sometimes be slow-going, gradual, with lots of ups and downs. It might take a lot of time, effort, and ongoing work to reach a place in your life where you feel okay or even happy, but the journey is worthwhile. Be encouraged that many survivors of sexual violence have been able to find happiness again in their life ... it is possible!

Like everyone else, you will have good days and bad days. On a 'bad day', give yourself permission to feel your feelings (both negative and positive). When you are having a particularly difficult day, sometimes it helps to just put everything on hold for the day, make an effort to get a decent night's sleep, and then face the world again the next day. But the important thing is to keep going. A good day is just around the corner so reach out for help if you need it and don't give up!

Although the past events cannot be changed, you have the power to alter the present.

CAN COUNSELLING HELP?

The effects of sexual assault might surface or re-surface at any moment and sometimes unexpectedly. Flashbacks, nightmares, panic attacks and other symptoms might arise when you least expect it. The effects of the abuse could arise, for instance, if you have to see the perpetrator, if you start a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc. Seeing a counsellor can be helpful if the effects of the trauma are having a detrimental impact on your life.

Understandably, some young people are hesitant to seek counselling for personal issues. Although there are a number of causes for this, dread of the unknown is probably the most common. For people who generally don't verbally communicate their feelings, it might be particularly intimidating. There may be some stigma attached to counselling in certain countries and cultures, and there may be misconceptions about what counselling entails.

Above all, the purpose of counselling is to help you, and the counsellor's job is to listen to your worries and emotions. Some people are afraid to attend counselling sessions because they believe they will have to go into great detail about the sexual assault. However, you don't have to discuss anything you don't want to in counselling. You can provide as little or as much detail as you feel comfortable with. If you feel the counsellor is asking too many questions that you don't feel safe answering at that point in time, let them know that and they will respect your boundaries and stop. Some people worry that their conversations won't be kept private, but counsellors must abide by a stringent code of conduct and keep whatever you say private (unless there is a risk to your safety or the safety of others).

Survivors of sexual violence from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds may also be afraid that seeking counselling or attending counselling might have a detrimental impact of their application for residency in Australia. It is important to be reassured that seeking or attending counselling services will not affect a person's application for permanent residency or their visa status. Counselling is a tremendously helpful tool for many people as they work towards healing from abuse and all survivors of sexual crime have a right to receive help and support.

If the sexual violence you experienced is having a detrimental effect on your daily life it is a sign that you might need or benefit from professional support. It is important to seek help to cope with the effects of sexual assault so that they don't dominate your life and cause serious effects in the long term. Good mental health is just as important as good physical health. It takes an enormous amount of courage to talk to someone about your experiences. But not seeking help can often lead to the situation becoming worse.

A good starting point might be to speak to your school counsellor or your doctor about a referral to a psychologist, mental health social worker or therapist. It is important that you find a worker who you feel comfortable with. Sometimes it can take several sessions talking with the counsellor before you start to trust them. If you really don't feel comfortable with your worker, try someone different.

Remember, people working in the trauma area hear trauma stories every day. While everybody's experiences are different and unique, they are familiar with the many feelings and challenges faced by young people who have survived sexual trauma and they won't judge or blame you. Even if therapy gets more difficult, have faith in your ability to heal.

Above all, never give up on yourself!

You can find a list of counselling, sexual assault and other related support services in NSW and Australia at the end of this Guide.

REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE TO THE AUTHORITIES

Some young people find a lot of relief in reporting the sexual assault to police and seeking justice through the legal system. Reporting the crime can be important for your own safety. Reporting can also make sure that things are put in place to reduce the risks of you being unsafe again (for example, Police can issue an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) on your behalf), if the perpetrator is someone you know. For some survivors reporting the crime is a matter of ensuring there are consequences for the perpetrator and to prevent other potential victims from being subjected to the same abuse.

However, it is important to know that making an official report to the police is not something you have to do. It is completely your choice. The justice system is limited in what it can do and it can be an extremely daunting, and at times, insensitive process. Justice may not be delivered in the end, which can be a re-traumatising experience itself. Nevertheless, some survivors find at least reporting to police, making a statement and having their voice heard to be helpful.

Reporting the abuse is your decision and only you can decide what is best for you.

It is possible for female survivors to request women police officers to speak to, if this makes the survivor feel more comfortable with reporting. It is also possible to request an interpreter who is of your gender if you require the assistance of an interpreter when making a report.

You can make a report in person or in some cases online.

Another option of reporting in NSW called **Sexual Assault Reporting Option**. Although it doesn't initiate an investigation and is not a formal report, it creates a record of what occurred and allows the NSW Police Force to gather information on sexual offences and offending. It could be the first step if you are unsure about pursuing a legal case against the perpetrator but would like the police to have the information.

Seeking legal advice from specialist legal services and support from specialist domestic and family violence services for survivors of sexual abuse is critical. Many of these organisations can help you with developing and implementing a safety plan, provide holistic and trauma-informed care and support you to make an informed decision about reporting to police. In an emergency always dial 000.

You can find a list of some of some specialist legal and other services at the end of this Guide.

HOW DO I MAKE A REPORT AND WHO DO I REPORT TO IF THE ABUSE HAPPENED IN AUSTRALIA?

Please be aware that the following information is general in nature and is not legal advice.

Reporting sexual crime requires navigating specific processes and procedures and you will most likely need the assistance of organisations that have been created to handle such cases. It is important to know that procedures may differ across states and territories but generally speaking, the process of reporting sexual violence involves the following steps:

Seeking Support

You can obtain support from specialised services or organisations that assist survivors of sexual violence. These

organisations can provide counselling, information, and assistance throughout the reporting process. This can happen before or after the report has been made to the police. This may be especially helpful if you choose to pursue legal action as the legal process can be extremely difficult emotionally. See the end of this Guide for a list of specialist support services.

Contacting the Police

You can report the incidents to the local police. In some cases, specialised units may handle these cases such as the NSW Sex Crimes Squad. Many police offices have access to translators, interpreters and Multicultural Liaison Officers.

Legal Advice

It may be helpful to seek legal advice to understand all your rights and options. Legal professionals experienced in handling cases of child sexual assault can provide you with advice and guidance tailored to your specific situation. See the end of this Guide for a list of specialist legal services.

Medical Investigation

You may decide to go through a medical examination, depending on the situation, in order to record any physical proof or injuries connected to the abuse. You can consent to or decline the medical examination.

Preserving Evidence

As in cases of recent crimes, it may be crucial for an investigation to save any pertinent evidence, including documents, letters, and personal belongings.

Police Investigation

In order to look into the reported history of abuse, the police may speak with you (the “victim”), possible witnesses, and the suspected perpetrator.

Legal Actions

Legal actions may be taken if the police investigation produces enough evidence to warrant charges being laid against the alleged offender. You may have to testify if the case is brought before a judge and/or jury. This can be extremely difficult for survivors, especially for children and young people - it can even be re-traumatising. However, some changes have recently been made to make testifying in a courtroom as comfortable as it can possibly be for young people and children who have been subjected to sexual violence, while still allowing their important testimony to be included in the trial.

In New South Wales (NSW), children and young people who are victims of sexual violence now have the option to give their evidence **remotely** in court, which means you do not have to be physically present in the courtroom during the trial. It is possible that you can give your testimony through a *video link*, which means you would be in a different room or location entirely, away from the courtroom. The video is transmitted live to the court where your evidence can be heard, but you are not directly in the courtroom.

In some cases, evidence may also be *pre-recorded* before the trial. This means that you won't need to attend court at all during the trial. When giving your evidence remotely, you may also be allowed to have a *support person* with you. This could be a trusted adult or a professional who can provide you with emotional support during the process.

As well as this, the courtroom can also be adapted to protect you from further trauma. For example, you might be able to give your evidence in a room designed to make you feel more comfortable, or screens may be used in court so that you don't have to see the offender, even if you give your evidence live.

These new facilities have been installed or upgraded in 45 courthouses across NSW. You can find out more about the changes that have been made in NSW help children and young people through the trial process below.

Court upgrades to help domestic and sexual violence survivors | Communities and Justice (nsw.gov.au)

Compensation

Some victims/survivors may be eligible to apply for victims of crimes financial compensation. You will need to check with a legal advisor or knowledgeable professional to find out which, if any, crimes compensation scheme you may be eligible for such as Victims Services in NSW.

Statutory Limitations

Statutory constraints might apply to cases of historical sexual assault. In order to give survivors more time to come forward, some countries have eliminated or extended their statutes of limitations.

It can be extremely beneficial to obtain help from counselling services, support groups, and other options accessible to survivors of sexual violence throughout the reporting and legal process. These services can help you to access the many tools available to provide assistance and support, before, during and after the reporting process.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL PROCESSES?

Please be aware that the following information is general in nature and is not legal advice.

Reporting sexual assault requires navigating specific processes and procedures and you will most likely need the assistance of organisations that have been created to handle such cases.

In Australia, a person is presumed innocent unless proven guilty under the law. When someone is accused of sexual assault, the police may file a charge (or charges) against them. This initiates a court case where the accused is tried for the offense or offenses, judged guilty or not, and punished if found guilty. This process involves the person who experienced the abuse. Even if the victim is the one who has suffered, sexual assault is legally regarded as a crime against the community, which is why the victims/survivors are referred to as “witnesses” in the proceedings. As a result, the victim/survivor does not need to hire their own lawyer because the community prosecutes through the Attorney General. There is no requirement for the victim/survivor to appear in court if the offender pleads guilty.

Since the investigation and judicial processes can be extremely emotionally taxing and even frightening for survivors, it is imperative that they receive complete support throughout the process.

YOU HAVE RIGHTS

You have rights when seeing a professional support for sexual violence.

You have the right

- To be treated with dignity, respect and understanding.
- To be provided with a safe, confidential place for counselling and/or other support.
- To make decisions about your own life.
- To have a support person with you if you choose.
- To have access to an interpreter.
- To express yourself without being judged.

HOPE, HEALING AND RECOVERY ARE POSSIBLE!

Even though healing from sexual violence can be really hard at times, it is possible to recover with the right care and support. While survivors of sexual violence are not necessarily “scarred for life”, many survivors who have healed from the abuse say that they were forever changed by it.

To all survivors ...

Even though the journey is filled with many challenges, ups and downs, good days and bad ones, with the right care and support, it is possible to recover from the trauma of sexual violence.

We hope that this Guide has given you hope that healing and recovery are possible and that you are feeling better equipped to take the next steps in *your* healing journey.

We commend you on your strength, courage and resilience and we wish you well in the next stage of your journey!

SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

In Australia, a number of organisations and services are available to help survivors of sexual violence from all cultural backgrounds. These services provide a range of support, including medical, psychological, legal, and advocacy assistance.

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICES

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE (TIS) NATIONAL

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Contact-us>

TIS provides immediate phone interpreting services.

Call and request an interpreter 24 hours a day, every day of the year

Phone: 131 450 (within Australia)

Phone: +613 9268 8332 (outside Australia)

Automated Telephone Interpreting Service (ATIS)

Call and request an interpreter 24 hours, every day of the year

Phone: 1800 131 450

Free Interpreting Service (FIS)

Enquiries about free services

Email: tis.freeinterpreting@homeaffairs.gov.au

Phone: 1300 575 847

Postal address

TIS National GPO Box 241 MELBOURNE VIC 3001

SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE TELEPHONE HELPLINE SERVICES

NSW Sexual Violence Helpline

For anyone in NSW impacted by sexual assault (including friends, families and supporters). Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 424 017

Sexual Abuse and Redress Support Service

For adult survivors of childhood institutional sexual abuse. Supporting anyone accessing the Redress Scheme and alternative compensation. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 211 028

Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone in Australia whose life has been impacted by domestic or family violence. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 943 539

Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual domestic and/or family violence. Available 24/7.

Phone: 1800 497 212

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CENTACARE SWNSW CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ASSAULT COUNSELLING SERVICE

<https://centacareswsw.org.au/services/child-and-adolescent-sexual-assault-counselling-service>

Centacare SWNSW Child and Adolescent Sexual Assault Counselling Service is a free and confidential service that provides intervention tailored to children and adolescents who are victim/survivors of sexual assault and their non-perpetrating parents/carers.

Centacare SWNSW provides services to Albury, Coolamon, Corowa, Finley, Griffith, Jerilderie, Junee, Leeton, Narrandera, Mulwala, and Wagga Wagga.

Centacare can be contacted by phone or via the website Contact Form.

Phone: 1300 619 379

KIDS HELPLINE

Provides free 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people.

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Phone: 1800 55 1800

E-SAFETY COMMISSIONER

The e-Safety Commissioner can help individuals experiencing online bullying or abuse to take action or make a complaint in Australia.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/report>

BRAVEHEARTS

Bravehearts is an Australian child protection organisation, solely dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse.

<https://bravehearts.org.au/>

<https://bravehearts.org.au/get-help/>

Phone: 1800 272 831

REACH OUT

Reach Out Australia's services provide self-help tools so that you have information and practical steps to help you understand what's going on and how to take action.

<https://au.reachout.com>

SEXUAL ASSAULT, COMPLEX TRAUMA AND/OR RELATED SERVICES

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE (NASAV)

NASAV provides an Australian directory for sexual assault services.

<https://www.nasasv.org.au>

<https://www.nasasv.org.au/support-directory>

PO Box 442

Mandurah WA 6210

Phone: (08) 9535 8263

NSW HEALTH

NSW Health has a network of specialist Sexual Assault Services (SAS) delivered by local health districts. Every local health district has a Sexual Assault Service that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week (see below).

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/sexualassault/Pages/health-sas-services.aspx>

NSW VICTIMS SERVICES

Victims Services in New South Wales offers support and assistance to victims of crime, including information on financial support and access to counselling services.

<https://victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au>

Commissioner of Victims' Rights

Victims Services

Department of Communities and Justice

Locked Bag 5118

Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: Victims Access Line: 1800 633 063

Translating and Interpreting Service: 131450

Aboriginal Contact Line: 1800 019 123

Voice calls or teletypewriter: 133677

Voice Speak and listen service: 1300 555 727

Email: vs@dcj.nsw.gov.au

NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE (DCJ)

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

Head office location: 6 Parramatta Square, 10 Darcy Street, Parramatta.

Mailing address: Locked Bag 5000 Parramatta NSW 2124.

Phone (General): 02 29377 6000

NSW POLICE

https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/contact_us

Phone:

All Emergencies: 000

Non-Emergencies: 131 444

Crime Stoppers: 1300 333 000

BIRCHTREE CENTRE – TRAUMA INFORMED THERAPISTS

The Birchtree Centre provides support and healing for those experiencing trauma and mental health challenges.

<https://www.birchtreecentre.com.au>

Phone: (02) 9518 8719

Forest Lodge

58 Parramatta Road, Forest Lodge NSW 2037

Phone: (02) 9571 5750

Pymble

14/33 Ryde Road, Pymble NSW 2073

Phone: (02) 8002 1073

BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

Blue Knot provides information and support for anyone who is affected by complex trauma. Complex trauma is repeated, ongoing, and often extreme interpersonal trauma (between people) – violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation experienced as a child, young person and adult.

<https://blueknot.org.au>

Phone: 1300 657 380

Email: helpline@blueknot.org.au

FULL STOP AUSTRALIA – NATIONAL SEXUAL ABUSE AND REDRESS SUPPORT SERVICE

Offers confidential, trauma specialist counselling for people of all genders who are impacted by violence and abuse, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members.

<https://fullstop.org.au>

Phone: Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS): 1800 11 FASS

Phone: 1800 385 578

Phone: (02) 8585 0333

Fax: (02) 9555 5911

Post: PO Box 555 Drummoyne NSW 2047

Email: info@fullstop.org.au

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT (ACSSA):

ACSSA provides research, resources, and information on sexual assault, including the impacts and responses to sexual violence.

<https://apo.org.au>

CENTRES AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT (CASA):

CASA centres provide free, confidential counselling and support services for individuals who have experienced sexual assault. Services may include crisis intervention, counselling, and advocacy.

CASA HOUSE

3rd Floor

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

210 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne

Phone: Counselling and Support Phone: (03) 9635 3610

Phone Admin Line: (03) 9635 3600

Facsimile: (03) 9663 9742

Email: casa@thewomens.org.au

SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES VICTORIA (SASV)

<https://www.sasvic.org.au>

Phone: 1800 806 292

Email: contactus@sasvic.org.au

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE FROM ASYLUM-SEEKING AND REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE (ASC)

The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome and support. The ASC provides practical help for people seeking asylum in Greater Sydney and advocate for fair and humane policies for refugees and people seeking asylum.

<https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au>

Newtown 43 Bedford Street

Newtown, NSW 2042 **Phone: (02) 9078 1900** Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

Auburn 44A Macquarie Road

Auburn, NSW 2144 Hours: Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm

NSW SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS (STARTTS)

STARTTS is a specialist, not-for-profit organisation that provides culturally relevant psychological treatment and support, and community interventions, to help people and communities heal the scars of torture and refugee trauma and rebuild their lives in Australia.

<https://www.startts.org.au>

152–168 The Horsley Drive

Carramar NSW 2163

Phone: (02) 9646 6700

Fax: (02) 9646 6710

Email: stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL (SSI)

<https://www.ssi.org.au>

SSI delivers a range of human services that connect individuals, families and children from diverse backgrounds with opportunities – from settlement support to disability programs, community engagement initiatives and training and employment pathways.

Head Office:

2/158 Liverpool Road,

Ashfield NSW 2131

Phone: (02) 8799 6700

Email: info@ssi.org.au

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

1800RESPECT

<https://www.1800respect.org.au>

1800RESPECT is a national helpline providing confidential counselling, information, and support for individuals impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence.

Phone: 1800 737 732

Text: 0458 737 732

WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA

White Ribbon is a global movement working to stop men's violence against women and children.

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.au>

OUR WATCH

www.ourwatch.org.au

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. It does not provide emergency assistance or support services.

GPO Box 24229

Melbourne VIC 3001

<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/contact>

MEN'S SPECIFIC SERVICES

MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE

Men's Referral Service provides advice for men about family violence.

<https://ntv.org.au/mrs>

Phone: 1300 766 491

MEN'S LINE AUSTRALIA

Men's Line Australia supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. 24/7 telephone and online support and information service for Australian men.

<https://mensline.org.au>

Phone: 1300 789 978

LEGAL AID SERVICES

Various legal aid services in each state and territory can provide information and assistance regarding legal processes, including seeking justice for survivors of sexual violence.

LEGAL AID NSW

Legal Aid NSW provides assistance to people who are unable to afford legal representation and access to the court system.

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/our-offices>

Phone: 1300 888 529

(from 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday excluding public holidays).

Web chat: <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/contact-us>

Legal Aid Domestic Violence Unit

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/domestic-and-family-violence/domestic-violence-unit>

Phone: 1800 979 529

WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT ADVOCACY SERVICES (WDVCAS)

WDVCAS is funded by Legal Aid NSW to provide information, assistance and court advocacy services to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/domestic-and-family-violence/womens-domestic-violence-court-advocacy-services>

Phone: 1800 WDVCAS or 1800 938 227

SPECIALIST LEGAL AID SERVICES

REFUGEE ADVICE AND CASEWORK SERVICE (RACS)

The Refugee Advice and Casework Service is a nonprofit providing essential legal support to people who have fled persecution to find certainty and safety in Australia.

www.racs.org.au

Eora Country, 30 Botany St, Randwick NSW 2031

Phone Legal Help / Client Line: (02) 8355 7227

Reception Line: (02) 8317 6500

Fax: (02) 7251 1532

Email: reception@racs.org.au

IMMIGRATION ADVICE AND RIGHTS CENTRE (IARC)

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) is a specialist, not-for-profit community legal centre (CLC) with over 35 years' experience in migration law and policy. IARC assists migrants experiencing vulnerability in NSW by providing free legal information, advice, and casework services.

<https://iarc.org.au>

Suite 3, Level 8
377-383 Sussex Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Phone: Info line: (02) 8234 0700

Domestic Violence Priority Line: (02) 8234 0777

Email: info@iarc.org.au

WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE NSW

Women's Legal Service NSW does not provide legal advice by email. Confidential information about the substance of a matter should not be given by email as it is not possible for WLS NSW to protect any confidential information provided. For legal advice please call their legal advice lines.

Office hours: Monday–Friday: 9am–1pm and 2pm–4.30pm

<https://www.wlsnsw.org.au>

PO Box 206, Lidcombe NSW 1825

Phone: (02) 8745 6900,

Fax: (02) 9749 4433

For the Telephone Interpreter Service **131 450** and ask them to call Women's Legal NSW on **(02) 8745 6900**. They will connect you to a solicitor for legal advice.

Email: reception@wlsnsw.org.au

FORCED MARRIAGE

MY BLUE SKY

My Blue Sky is a national service run by Anti-Slavery Australia for people who are in a forced marriage or worried about being forced to marry.

<https://www.mybluesky.org.au/>

Phone: 02 9514 8115

SMS: +61 481 070 844

Email: help@mybluesky.org.au

TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

ANTI-SLAVERY AUSTRALIA

Anti-Slavery Australia is the only specialist centre providing free legal and migration services to people who have experienced or are at risk of modern slavery in Australia.

<https://antislavery.org.au>

Phone: +612 9514 9660

Email: antislavery@uts.edu.au

Anti-Slavery Legal Practice

Phone: +612 9514 8115

Email: ASALegal@uts.edu.au

AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

Australian Red Cross: Support for Trafficked People Program

<https://www.redcross.org.au/migration/support-for-trafficked-people/>

Phone: 1800 113 015

Email: national_stpp@redcross.org.au

THE SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army Trafficking and Slavery Safe House

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/>

Phone: 1300 473 560 or 1800 000 277

Email: enslavery@salvationarmy.org.au

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE (AFP)

<https://www.afp.gov.au/crimes/human-trafficking-and-people-smuggling/human-trafficking-and-slavery>

Phone: 131 237

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP)

<https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/anti-people-trafficking-strategy/support-for-trafficked-people-program>

LGBTIQA+ COUNSELLING AND/OR SUPPORT SERVICES

ACON

ACON is NSW's leading HIV and LGBTQ+ health organisation.

www.acon.org.au

Sydney 414 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Phone: 02 9206 2000

Email: acon@acon.org.au

Northern Rivers Suite 4P Conway Court, Lismore, NSW 2480

Phone: 02 6622 1555

Email: northernrivers@acon.org.au

Hunter (Hunter, New England, Central Coast, Central West)

129 Maitland Road
Islington, NSW 2296

Phone: 02 49627700

Email: hunter@acon.org.au

Southern, Far West & Blue Mountains

Phone: 1800 063 060 / 02 9206 2114

Email: regionaloutreach@acon.org.au

KIRKETON ROAD CENTRE

The Kirketon Road Centre is a health care service that provides free and anonymous care to people who experience barriers to accessing health care. South-Eastern Sydney Local Health District (nsw.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 9360 2766

Fax: (02) 9360 5154

QLIFE

[www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

Phone: 1800 184 527

Webchat available between 3pm and midnight

<https://qlife.org.au/resources/chat>

RAINBOW FAMILIES

'Rainbow Families' supports, connects, celebrates, empowers, and advocates for LGBTQ+ parents and their families at every stage of their lives. Rainbow Families serves as an important voice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, diverse and queer (LGBTQ+) parents and their children.

www.rainbowfamilies.com.au

PO BOX 306, Erskineville NSW 2043

Phone: 0481 565 958

https://www.rainbowfamilies.com.au/contact_us

ASYLUM- SEEKERS CENTRE LGBTIQA+ peer-group (for people seeking asylum only)

<https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au>

The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome and support. The ASC provides practical help for people seeking asylum in Greater Sydney and advocate for fair and humane policies for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Phone: (02) 9078 1900

Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

Address

43 Bedford Street
Newtown, NSW 2042

Address

44A Macquarie Road
Auburn, NSW 2144

Hours: Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm

SOME RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP

Care Package for Survivors of Sexual Trauma

By Sexual Assault Resource Centre (Government of Western Australia)

<https://www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/~media/HSPs/NMHS/Hospitals/WNHS/Documents/Patients-resources/SARC---Care-Package-for-Survivors-of-Sexual-Trauma.pdf>

NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

The ECAV provides useful resources to assist victims of sexual assault, their families and communities. These publications are available to download free of charge.

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/sexualassault/Pages/sexual-assault-resources.aspx>

<https://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au/Resources/Resource-Shop/booklets>

“Re-Regulated: Set Your Life Free From Childhood PTSD and Trauma-Driven Behaviours that Keep You Stuck” by Anna Runkle (2024) Hay House LLC.

In *Re-Regulated*, author Anna Runkle provides practical techniques, worksheets and prompts to calm triggers, break out of isolation, and help change the self-defeating behaviours that are so common for people who have experienced trauma and complex trauma.

“What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing” by Bruce. D Perry and Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey and trauma expert, Dr Bruce Perry, discuss the impact of trauma and adverse experiences – and how healing must begin with a shift to asking ‘What happened to you?’

“The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse” by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis

The Courage to Heal is a comprehensive guide that offers hope and a map of the healing journey to women who were sexually abused as children and their loved ones.

“Victims No Longer: The Classic Guide for Men Recovering from Sexual Child Abuse” by Mike Lew and Ellen Bass

The first book written specifically for men, *Victims No Longer* examines the changing cultural attitudes toward male survivors of incest and other sexual trauma. This book offers compassionate and practical advice, supported by personal anecdotes and statements of male survivors. *Victims No Longer* helps male survivors to:

* Identify and validate their childhood experiences

- * Explore strategies of survival and healing
- * Work through issues such as trust, intimacy, and sexual confusion
- * Establish a support network for continued personal recovery
- * Make choices that aren't determined by abuse

Psychotherapist Mike Lew has worked with thousands of men and women in their healing from the effects of childhood sexual abuse, rape, physical violence, emotional abuse, and neglect. His book contains invaluable strategies for, particularly for men, on recovering from incest and other abuse.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

Hints For Healing

<https://www.hintsforhealing.startts.org.au>

NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

A wide range of resources for survivors and relevant professionals.

<https://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au>

Women's Legal Resource Service NSW

Ask LOIS is a free legal online information service provided by Women's Legal Service NSW.

<https://vimeo.com/asklois>

E-Safety Commissioner

The e-Safety Commissioner can help individuals experiencing online bullying or abuse to take action or make a complaint in Australia.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us>