

WestCASA

2021-2022

Western Region Centre
Against Sexual Assault
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ANNUAL
REPORT

CONTENTS

WestCASA 34th ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

WestCASA Board of Governance and Bios	3
Chair Report	7
Chief Executive Officer Report	8
WestCASA Programs	10
Community Counselling	10
Specialised Therapeutic Trauma Counselling in the Justice Department	10
Specialised Trauma Support and Counselling in other correctional facilities	10
Group Programs	11
Program Development and Community Education	11
Body Based Therapies	12
Crisis Care Unit Response Team	12
Partnerships	13
WestCASA Clinical Services	14
Spotlight on DPFC	15
Poem - the earth says	17
Feedback from Clients	18
Statistics 2021-2022	20



WestCASA acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government, particularly Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Department of Justice and Community Safety.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Helen Barnes

Being a member of the WestCASA board for the past nine years has been a rewarding experience. Joining a group of dynamic and passionate women committing their time to such an invaluable cause, I would describe as nothing less than heartening

A particular inspiration that continues to draw me is the women who make up WestCASA. The relentless drive, skill and compassion in making a difference for many vulnerable members of society is so evident within this organisation. Through rapid growth and change, caused by internal and external influences, WestCASA has weathered the storms with both tenacity and open-mindedness.

My personal values strongly resonate with the values of WestCASA – promoting a feminist environment where equality is the norm and living in a world free from violence. For me, joining WestCASA as a board member allows me to contribute to this mission.

Change and Program Management is my profession, I bring to the board skills within this discipline.

Throughout my tenure, I have been involved in various subcommittees: Change Management for the transition to the MDC, Board Recruitment during 2019 and 2020 and currently the Policy and Risk subcommittee.

I look forward with anticipation on helping to shape the future of WestCASA as we weather further storms and move towards making the world a better place.

Mohana Mahadevan

Mohana is a Person of Colour, a migrant and is proud of her Singaporean Ceylonese heritage. She had studied and lived in Australia for over 10 years.

Mohana is a Social Worker by trade and has worked in a variety of social services sectors such as settlement services, youth services, child and family services and family violence services.

She is passionate about culture, diversity inclusion and have a strong interest and understanding of systemic disadvantage and unconscious bias.

Her expertise and skills are:

- Leadership and Management
- Project Management and Development
- Systemic Analysis
- Reflective Practice and Supervision
- Understanding and thriving for cultural inclusivity in the workplace.

Mohana was approached to be on the WestCASA board for her strong ethos in breaking down systemic barriers and inclusive practice. She is a strong feminist and is passionate about eliminating family violence and sexual violence. Having worked in the family violence sector for many years, Mohana felt that she can contribute positively to WestCASA. Her experience in managing projects, identifying gaps in service delivery and passion for the WestCASA vision meant that she could make a valuable contribution to the board.

Mohana is inspired by the incredible work that WestCASA staff as a whole do for each other and its wider community. Mohana is humbled by the dedication that WestCASA has to its community and in creating a world free from sexual violence.

Mohana feels privileged to be part of a board that provides a voice for all members equally with contributes in a collaborative manner.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Sherin Maxwell

A Chartered Accountant with experience gained in professional services firm coupled with senior finance roles in the commercial, not-for-profit (NFP) and public health sectors. Led finance and cross-functional teams in multi-cultural environments. Experienced in aspects of financial management including insightful reporting, planning and analysis, strategy, stakeholder management, governance, risk and compliance. Enjoys collaborating with others and contributing towards a successful and positive team culture.

I am extremely passionate about and have compassion for people and particularly those who are vulnerable and marginalised. I have always had a compelling desire to be involved with and contribute positively to this cause through purpose driven organisations like WestCASA particularly in Melbourne's Western community (my community).

Following a presentation about WestCASA at an NFP CAANZ event early in 2020, I was instantly drawn to the purpose and mission of the organisation and submitted my very keen expression of interest to be involved as a Board member.

I am a strong advocate for developing and nurturing healthy relationships within our family homes, community, workplaces, nation and the world at large and believe that we can all play a valuable part in addressing various social issues including sexual assault and family violence.

It is an honour and privilege to serve as a Board member at WestCASA as it enables me to collaborate with management and the other equally passionate Board Members in advancing the purpose, vision and goals of WestCASA.

Natasha Smith

I am a not-for-profit sector leader and mental health clinician who underpins her work with strong values of intersectional feminism, integrity, accountability, justice, and compassion. I am currently the Operations Manager of the headspace's nation-wide Early Career Program and brings to the WestCASA Board over 10-years of combined experience in board directorship, clinical governance, clinical leadership, operations management and service provision. I am passionate about developing strong frameworks that shape and maintain positive organisational culture and enhancing the engagement and sustainability of not-for-profit workforces.

I am a strong advocate for lived experience leadership and participation in service design, delivery and governance. She has served on multiple clinical governance and management committees for LGBTIQ+ community led organisations such as Switchboard Victoria and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia and has led diversity and inclusion action plans within mainstream organisations to improve responsiveness to queer, transgender and gender diverse young people seeking mental health and medical care.

I was an active member of Q-West, a consortium of community and health services who worked collectively to advocate for and improve the LGBTIQ+ inclusion in health and wellbeing services in Melbourne's western region.

As a Youth Mental Health Clinician/Psychologist, I worked almost exclusively with young people in Melbourne's west and is deeply passionate about ensuring local communities receive high quality and accessible services. I look forward to continuing to bring to WestCASA's Board her governance, not-for-profit sector and local community knowledge.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Dr Skye Kinder

I am a passionate advocate for rural and other marginalised patients and their communities. In addition to my clinical work as a doctor in the field of mental health, I am a prolific writer and award-winning speaker and health commentator. I seek to address health inequality through extensive volunteerism, charity work and public advocacy efforts.

I was recognised as 2017 VIC Junior Doctor of the Year and finalist for Australia and New Zealand Junior Doctor of the Year. Later named 2019 Young Victorian of the Year and 2019 VIC Young Australian of the Year. I have featured on the Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence list and is a Forbes 30 Under 30 honouree, and recently inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

As a doctor, I work with victim/survivors of sexual assault in a clinical capacity. I believe that WestCASA provides the highest standard of care for victim/survivors of sexual assault and their communities in the Western region of Melbourne. Supporting the work of WestCASA is a privilege.

The WestCASA Board and broader organisation comprises women from all walks of life and differing career stages, but with shared feminist values. The opportunity to teach and learn from these women is inspiring.

Kathryn Culmsee

WestCASA Board Secretary

- Bachelor of Laws, University of Western Australia 2001
- Bachelor of Science (Honours), University of Western Australia 1999
- Graduate – Australian Institute of Company Directors 2013
- Diploma of Applied Corporate Governance 2015
- Admitted as Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Western Australia 2002

Kathryn is an accomplished company secretary with diverse experience in corporate governance.

My interest in social justice, feminist leanings and drive to see the elimination of sexual violence in society makes me passionate about WestCASA's success.

I have been a lawyer for more than 20 years and before that was an Environmental Scientist. I am skilled in governance and have a Graduate Diploma in Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia and am a graduate of the Company Directors Course at the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Being a member of the WestCASA board for the past five years has been an incredibly rewarding experience. We are a dedicated group of women, with differing backgrounds and experience, who are working together to make the world a better place, free from the fear of sexual violence and where victim/ survivors of sexual assault are treated with care and respect to recover and heal.

In addition to the Board Secretary role, I am also on the following WestCASA subcommittees: Board recruitment; Policy and Risk; and AGM planning.

I look forward to the continued growth of WestCASA and the increasing diversity of services we deliver to make the world a safer place.

WESTCASA BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Jenny Elliot

I am originally from New Zealand but have lived in Melbourne for more than 20 years, and it is now home. I have 2 daughters who I adore. I have worked for more than 25 years at PwC where I am a partner.

I became involved in the WestCASA Board because I have a desire to support a cause which I feel passionate about.

I am inspired about being on the Board and involved in this community agency because it means working with an inspiring group of women. I have learnt so much from my fellow Board members as we all have different perspectives we bring.

It is a very supportive Board and I feel privileged to assist an organisation that is making the world a safer place for women.

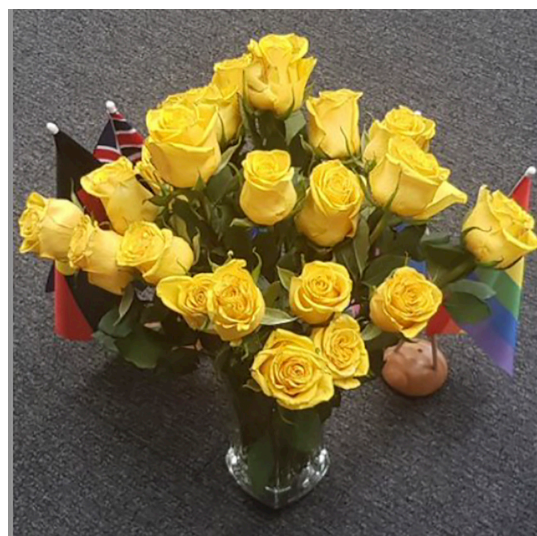
Jacqui Morse

I have worked for more than 30 years in the sexual assault and violence prevention field. I currently provide external Reflective Practice supervision to various organisations working to respond to and prevent gendered, and all other forms, of violence.

Due to the recent expansion of the service, it is exciting to see the increased possibilities for prevention and intervention programs, addressing the structural causes of violence.

To the community and people who access the service, we hope to continue to learn more effective and compassionate ways to respond to the many layers of trauma and injustice that is sexual violence.

I have been on the Board of WestCASA for 12 years, leaving the Board at the end of this year. It has been a privilege to contribute to the work of this vital service, and witness the dedication, passion, and integrity of the WestCASA staff and volunteer Board.



Roses sent by a client

CHAIR REPORT

WestCASA proudly supports the communities of the western region of Greater Melbourne, with our catchment area spanning the five Local Government Areas of Wyndham, Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Melton. For more than 30 years we have provided immediate support and mid-to-long term therapeutic counselling to people who have been impacted by sexual violence in Melbourne's west.

As well as our direct-care individual and group counselling services, we also provide community education and training to a range of schools, universities, councils and other organisations across our catchment, and work with the Department of Justice and Community Safety to provide therapeutic, trauma-specific support to more than one hundred people at the Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre every year.

The 2021-2022 financial year was hallmarked by transformation and the Board has continued to be impressed and inspired by the flexibility, creativity and commitment of WestCASA staff.

Our staff have risen to the important and necessary challenge of delivering much needed trauma-informed services amidst a continuing global pandemic. We would like to thank all of our staff members for their dedication, including our Crisis Care Unit response team, who have provided crisis support for people who have recently experienced sexual assault, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We also acknowledge that Melbourne's western region is home to the most culturally diverse and rapidly growing population's in Victoria. As such, it has been essential for WestCASA to continue to build its capacity to meaningfully engage and respond to the growing needs of the community within which we are so proud to exist. Expanding upon the work of **Sasha Earle** and former Board Chair, **Nicole Battle**, WestCASA has prioritised the establishment of connecting building, collaboration, and cultural safety.

Of note, in the second half of the financial year we welcomed our new CEO, **Elisa Buggy**, who has proceeded to lead WestCASA through significant and exciting changes to the organisation's structure. We would like to thank Elisa for the compassion, agility and commitment she leads with and the dedication she has shown to ensuring WestCASA continues to grow and provide essential supports to Victim-Survivors.

As well as structural change at an operational level, we have also experienced change as a Board.

We say farewell to **Sherin Maxwell**, **Jacqui Morse**, and our Chair, **Nicole Battle** – all of whom have made enormous contributions to the vitality of WestCASA and who share more than 20 years of collective service between them. We are so grateful for the skill and knowledge each member brought to the Board over their years with us and wish them the very best for their futures.

We would also like to thank **Jenny Elliot** for providing expert financial oversight and guidance to WestCASA during the 2021-2022 financial year in her role as Treasurer. This will be Jenny's final full financial year as Treasurer and acknowledge the enormous contribution Jenny has made to WestCASA over the last decade.

The Board is now finalising its next recruitment phase and we hope to continue to build on the strong governance frameworks we already have in place. We look forward to welcoming our new Board members in due course.

To the remaining Board Members **Kate Culmsee**, **Helen Barnes** and **Mohana Mahadevan**, thank you for your hard work, dedication, and skilled leadership. It has been a pleasure to work alongside our fellow Board members to lead and support the organisation to maintain its standards of excellence in progressing our objective to end sexual violence in our community.

On behalf of the Board of the Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault (WestCASA), we are delighted to present to you the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

NATASHA SMITH (Interim Chair)

SKYE KINDER (Vice-Chair)

WESTCASA BOARD

CEO REPORT

And so ends another extraordinary year. One filled with the change and uncertainty of grappling with another year of pandemic, and one filled with inspiration and hope reignited by the brave and courageous advocacy led by Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins; the fearlessness of the Blak Lives Matter movement, and the more recent outrage and solidarity sparked by the tragedy of Mahsa Amini's death in Iran.

These, and so many other voices around the globe and here in Victoria continue to replenish the determination in WestCASA to realise its vision of an end to sexual violence of any kind in our community.

This year has been my first year as the CEO of WestCASA. I was officially welcomed into this incredible organisation on the 29th November, 2021 and it was immediately clear to see the passion and practice knowledge that sits at the heart of our service.

In January, after a very long two years, we started returning to the workplace having successfully held as many people as possible from remote working environments throughout the peaks of the pandemic.

When we opened our service back up to face to face counselling in March, the steady flow of people accessing our service increased fast – which indicated not only that therapeutic sexual violence and specialist trauma services are still very much essential to the health and wellbeing of our community, but also that we needed to build stronger organisational scaffolding and put better supports in place for the broader team.

In May, after much consideration, the Board endorsed a plan to put the necessary supports in place, including restructuring of a number of roles to better suit the needs of this growing organisation.

With the introduction of dedicated community education and program development leads and a dedicated communications and fund-raising coordinator, as well as creating stronger finance and administration capacity, WestCASA is now in a strong position to implement our new strategic plan, which will be developed at the end of 2022.

With change brings renewed energy, and to that end, we have been fortunate to have developed formal partnerships with **VACCA and Victoria University**, and have provided community education to a number of high schools in the Maribyrnong and Wyndham cities; to local sporting clubs and multicultural groups as well as community centres and university staff – the list continues to grow.

In amongst our already busy community counselling and intake work, it has been full steam ahead for our sexual assault support service work in the West.

Our partnership with the **Department of Justice and Community Safety** has continued to provide specialised trauma support to more than 100 people per year in the **Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre**.

This year, that included a four-month pilot program introducing access to therapeutic case management for people whose release date may have meant there was not enough time to engage in therapeutic counselling or group work inside the prison. This pilot was so successful that we are now working on ways to embed it into the broader fabric of our service provisions.

Our work in the women's prison is now starting to gain traction in the men's prisons across the state, where we have been proud to provide support to a number of people from the Trans and Gender Diverse community, as well as a slowly growing number of cis-gendered men seeking our support. We look forward to working with DJCS to increase our capacity to provide services like these into 2022-23.

It has also been a busy year for our **Crisis Care Unit**. With continuing struggles to access forensic medical services across the state, our after-hours and intake teams have worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure support has been available 24/7 for people accessing services in the West.

CEO REPORT

In September, we joined with **SASVic** and our partners across the state to raise our concerns in relation to access, including speaking to the *7.30 Report* and *ABC News* – both important pieces of advocacy which we will continue to contribute to over the next year.

And we couldn't have achieved all of this and continued to show up for our community if it weren't for the support of **Family Safety Victoria** (Department of Families Fairness and Housing) and the **Department of Justice and Community Safety**, as well as the generosity of our donors and the grants we have received for training and workforce development through **Sexual Assault Services Victoria (SASVic)** and **Safe and Equal** – both outstanding peaks.

We are also extremely proud of the work we continue to build on in collaborative practice and very grateful to our partners in Victoria Police, DFFH, Gatehouse (RCH), IPC Health, GenWest, Odyssey House, and all of the wonderful people we work alongside in the Multi-Disciplinary Centre in Wyndham.

My deep gratitude also goes to the **WestCASA Board** – a dedicated and passionate group of people who have always showed up when needed.

And finally, to the entire **WestCASA team**. You all do such incredible work, and I am so proud to of all that we have achieved in such a short period – looking forward to all there is to come!

ELISA BUGGY



WESTCASA PROGRAMS

Community Counselling

The counselling team have responded to the challenges of service provision in the COVID environment with great flexibility and sensitivity always aimed at providing the best therapeutic approach. This has involved upskilling and engaging with technological tools to provide accessible alternatives for vulnerable clients to have safe access to therapeutic services during lockdowns and periods of isolation.

Despite the sector wide challenges of a dearth in supply of appropriately experienced and qualified Counsellor/Advocates, our staff are meeting the challenges of not only the increase in demand for service, but also the increased requirement to meet the therapeutic needs of clients bringing intersectional themes of family violence and sexual assault trauma to their therapy.

Counsellor/Advocates have responded to the increased need for clients to access face to face services by smoothly transitioning fully into working back onsite at the MDC and outreach sites (Melton and Footscray), providing in person sessions in a COVID safe environment.

The positive impact of COVID has been the development and implementation of accessible options of online and telephone counselling which provide other avenues of contact for those victim/survivors with accessibility challenges.

Specialised Therapeutic Trauma Counselling in the Justice Department

The impacts of COVID had created significant barriers to accessing therapeutic care for the women and gender diverse people in Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC).

The justice system mitigated risk of COVID with long imposed periods of lockdown which meant counsellor/advocates were competing with other agencies to secure phone/zoom appointments as efficiently as possible offsite. This impacted greatly on the number of victim/survivors counsellor/advocates could support, and, as with community counselling, demand for services has increased significantly.

The DPFC team is fortunately fully resourced, and staff are enjoying regaining access to the prison and the ability to engage with clients.

Specialised Trauma Support and Counselling in other correctional facilities

In response to increasing requests, WestCASA has begun providing therapeutic counselling support for Trans and Gender Diverse people who are housed in men's Correctional Facilities. We look forward to furthering discussion with Corrections Victoria about how we might be able to build capacity to meet this growing need over the coming year.

WestCASA has also been receiving requests from cis-gendered men in correctional facilities who are seeking therapeutic support to heal from trauma. Whilst currently not funded to provide this support, WestCASA has been making every effort to facilitate requests whenever possible with the intent of seeking more sustainable funding to expand this service more widely as demand increases.

Please see the **Spotlight on DPFC** article by Penny McDonald on page 14 for further information on our work in the Justice space

WESTCASA PROGRAMS

Group Programs

Counsellor/Advocates within the Justice Program have been able to resume group sessions with client and staff in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre since the end of COVID lockdowns.

Moringa is a group run with residents of DPFC and promotes healing and growth and new life through a range of sensory mediums.

The **Debriefing Series** provides a safe facilitated debriefing space for corrections officers to talk about challenges within their role and explore with peers and facilitators different approaches and strategies to address these challenges.

Therapeutic Case Manager Pilot Program: With additional funding from the Department of Justice and Community Safety WestCASA ran a 4-month Pilot Project for a therapeutic case management support function. The subsequent role of Therapeutic Case Manager (TCM) role began on the 29th of March. The TCM was employed with significant experience in case management and navigating support services to advocate and support people in and transitioning out of detention. The Project Evaluation Report demonstrated very positive results, and enthusiastic uptake of the service, with further indications of ongoing demand being strong.

Program Development and Community Education

Head of Operations, Karen Woolford

This year has seen WestCASA invest in additional resources aimed at supporting a targeted focus on community engagement and education. This led to the creation of a new role; Lead, Program Development and Community Engagement.

The newly appointed person in the role will support a strategic approach to engaging with the 5 local government areas WestCASA has in its catchment zone. The greater western region of Melbourne has one of the biggest multicultural catchments in Australia, with residents originating from over 200 different countries.

With this in mind, a stronger emphasis has been put on engaging with all facets of the community and ensuring that WestCASA service provision is accessible and culturally sensitive to all members of the community we are part of.

One of the key results thus far has been the development of an exciting partnership with Victoria University.

WestCASA in collaboration with Victoria University provide:

- Onsite Sexual Assault and trauma counselling for the university community responding to the identified findings of 2021 National Student Safety Survey (NSSS)
- Specialised training in areas such as managing disclosures, respectful relationships and affirmative consent
- Quality audit and review of Victoria University training materials specific to our subject matter expertise.

Already the request for training support and engagement with various community groups; cultural, sporting and those working with young people have actively sought the specialised training of WestCASA in areas related to relationships, affirmative consent, and sexual and intimate partner violence. These trainings sessions have been opportunities for Counsellor/Advocates to impart knowledge and experience and respond to participants based in their practice.

WESTCASA PROGRAMS

Body Based Therapies

Despite the first half of the year presenting significant challenges to the provision of our Body Based Therapy programs, the team were impressively able to adapt their modes of delivery to online by supporting people to implement their own, self-administered mechanisms of shiatsu and via offering online trauma-based yoga classes for people to link into.

Of course, when the time came to re-introduce face-to-face programs, it was wonderful to welcome back those people who were either unable to engage online or preferred an in-person practice. We look forward to exploring ways to extend our ever popular and unique practice in the new year.

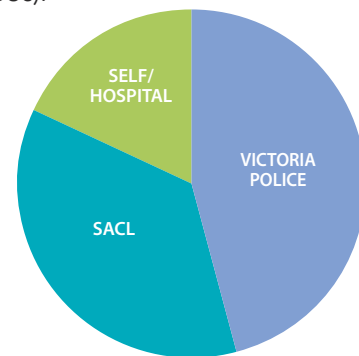
Crisis Care Unit Response Team

In the 2021-2022 WestCASA delivered 72 crisis care units (CCUs).

Almost 75% (53) CCU presentations occurred after-hours. Victoria's lockdowns in the second half of 2021 saw a fall in WestCASA monthly CCU presentations by almost 60% between July and October. Overall, 2021-22 WestCASA CCU attendances remained in line with pre-COVID service delivery.

Forty-six percent (33) of CCUs were referred from Victoria Police, followed by the after-hours Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL) 36% (26) and self /hospital referrals 18% (13).

Police referrals remain the most common pathway for clients into crisis care units at WestCASA.

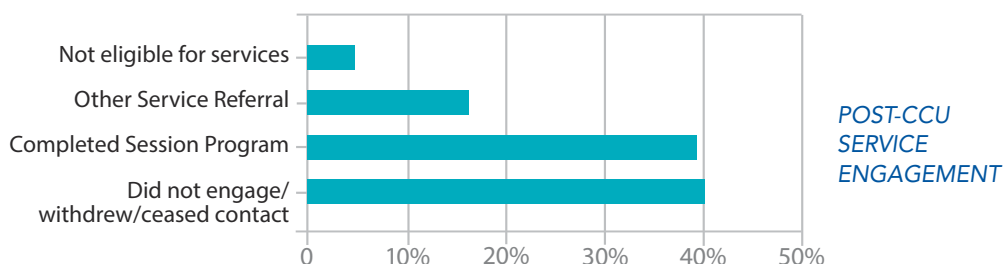


2021-2022 CCU REFERRAL SOURCES

Forty percent (29) of CCU clients either did not engage, withdrew or ceased contact with WestCASA following their CCU presentation. This figure is consistent with historic reporting and service take up by clients who have experienced recent sexual assault.

Four percent (3) of CCU clients were not offered service support from WestCASA as their primary presentations (mental health, substance misuse) required stabilisation prior to engaging in trauma informed therapies.

Thirty-nine percent (28) of CCU clients who engaged with WestCASA went on to complete their session program.

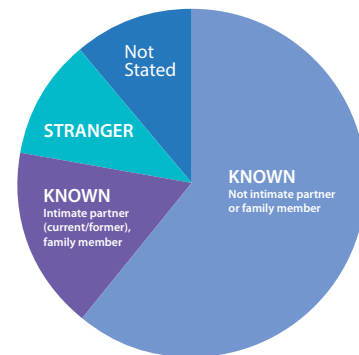


Lack of engagement or contact with sexual assault services following a recent sexual assault is not uncommon among recent victim/survivors of sexual assault.

WESTCASA PROGRAMS

Persons known, but not related or in a relationship with the client, accounted for 61% (44) of perpetrators reported as responsible for recent sexual assaults by CCU clients. Current and former partners and family members accounted for 17% (12), while 11% (8) of assaults were reported as perpetrated by strangers. The remaining 11% were not categorised.

Persons known, but not related or in a current or former relationship with the victim/survivor, accounted for almost two-third of perpetrators in recent sexual assaults.



PERPETRATORS OF RECENT SEXUAL ASSAULT

COVID Impacts

Along with the Royal Women's and Monash Hospital, Sunshine Hospital was one of three hospitals the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) continued to attend during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdowns. The reduction in sites was initially driven by the need to preserve forensic medical staff from COVID-19 exposure and prevent possible spreading events across multiple hospital sites. However, 12 months later these sites currently remain the only hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne at which acute forensic sexual assault services are offered by VIFM. VIFM has cited resourcing constraints in Clinical Forensic Medicine as the reason for the maintaining limited site services.

Approximately 6% of WestCASA CCUs required the client to travel from Barwon, Central Victoria and Ballarat regions to undergo forensic medical examinations. While not a direct result of the current contraction of forensic sexual assault service sites due, it exposes the enduring service delivery model and resourcing challenges of clinical forensic medical specialisation in Victoria. It also speaks to the ongoing barriers in accessing timely and expert health care faced by clients in regional and rural areas.

WestCASA Counsellor/Advocates reported some impacts to clients arising from service delivery changes due to COVID-19. Most acutely, this was observed in staff attrition and changes across hospital and policing services. Restrictions and challenges in the provision of specialist sexual assault training and information sessions often led to a disconnect in practice and service provision for clients. This occasionally manifested in excessive wait times for clients who were sent to emergency departments for forensic exams without SOCIT members in attendance; or who were left in emergency department waiting areas as nursing and medical staff were unfamiliar with sexual assault notification processes. These practice gaps led to delays in counsellor/advocate attendance and protracted CCU presentations for clients and disconnected service delivery across agencies.

In the second quarter of 2022 training and information sessions have recommenced, providing opportunities to realign practice and service delivery across agencies.

PARTNERSHIPS

VACCA

GenWest

SOCIT

Family Violence Investigation Unit

Family Violence Command

IPC Health

DFFH Child Protection

Odyssey House

RCH Gatehouse

WESTCASA CLINICAL SERVICES

Introducing our new Head of Clinical Services – Maria Papadontos

We are delighted to welcome Maria Papadontos to the WestCASA team as the new Head of Clinical Services, in place to lead our clinical governance and model of clinical practice. Maria is a Social Worker, Counsellor/Advocate, and Trauma-Based Yoga Instructor who comes with many years of clinical experience from a range of sectors, most recently including South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA).

Maria has provided the following reflections on Clinical Practice and the multiple ways it can be both applied and interpreted:

WHAT IS CLINICAL PRACTICE?

When we think about the term clinical practice, it can conjure up several definitions, experiences, ideas, and ideologies. We could define and explain it in terms of a social work model, psychology model, various therapy models, a public health model, or even an ecologically based biopsychosocial model. We can think of it as offering trauma informed care services to individuals affected by sexual assault, sexual violence, and family violence within a model of Treatment of Complex Trauma; by providing critical, culturally appropriate therapeutic assessments and interventions.

However, when we talk about clinical practice in the context of sexual assault, sexual violence, and family violence there is more to clinical practice than undergoing a biopsychosocial assessment, providing therapeutic counselling, utilising the current evidence-based practice, referring to other services, advocacy, and tailoring clinical interventions to meet the needs of the individuals we aim to support, which we all strive to do, to the best of our ability.

There are fundamental elements we cannot lose sight of: **offering a safe container** to meet an individual where they are at, **providing care and support by connecting** with an individual, by being able to sit with someone's experience of sexual and family violence in a way where we **do not cause further harm** and by offering opportunities for **empowerment**.

When we view clinical practice from purely a clinical perspective (which is very important and critical to providing evidence-based services), we may fail to consider all aspects and facets of what it means when we speak about providing trauma informed services of care for the communities and individuals we strive to support.

And so...

I invite you in this moment as you are reading this annual report, to consider clinical practice in relation to creating safety and stabilisation through relational safety, by engaging in mutuality and reciprocity to connect with individuals who have lived experiences and to allow for empowerment whether it is through advocacy or other means for individuals affected by trauma.

I invite you to recognise a person's **somatic trauma experience** and how we engage from this perspective in our work as fundamental to one's journey.

I invite you to see the human being in front of you who by their instinctual nature strive to connect and are offering us the privilege of connecting with them in their experience of suffering.

I invite you to keep in the fore of your mind that the healing journey from trauma runs deep at an individual level and broader community level.

I invite you not to lose sight of the impact and devastation that colonisation has caused and how we can come back to connection through one's story, by sitting in circle, utilising the wisdom of elders past and present and becoming, in the 'circle way'.

I invite you to pause and consider your role in the care of communities and individuals and what clinical practice means to you.

I invite you to continue the conversation for all of us, as a community and sector, **to do better**.

When we are able to offer a felt sense of safety through being present with another, the possibility of the other person moving toward this sense of safety awakens the healing space between us through resonance.

Bonnie Badenoch

SPOTLIGHT ON DPFC

The need for continuing trauma-informed therapy and advocacy has continued this past year with a total of **447 women and gender diverse people** referring to our service.

Of the total of people we saw for one-on-one therapy, 23% were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women and gender diverse people. Having nearly a quarter of our case load represented by Indigenous people incarcerated at DPFC continues to demonstrate the importance of culturally informed and safe practices for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to reach out and ask for help.

The team supported Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people both in and out of the prison were involved in care team meetings, advocacy and referrals and also sourcing valuable resources for their clients.

In the past year, the team have struggled with the **ongoing impacts on COVID** on the prison system meaning we were one week allowed in and the next they were in lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID in DPFC.

This meant many appointments were cancelled and unable to be rescheduled due to clients being locked into their units and also the lack of availability of remote access appointments. With all these barriers in place, the team were able to maintain strong connections with their clients and would provide information and advocacy to support their clients throughout the impacts of COVID.

The clients would also tell us of their relief each time they got to see us face-to-face and the difference it made in the therapeutic process.

It has been a tricky system to navigate as the community continues to have relaxed attitudes about COVID, the prison remains strongly committed to keeping COVID at bay.

Because of the impacts of COVID, we have not been able to run any group or training programs in DPFC.

With not being able to run these programs in prison, the Counsellor/Advocates who were assigned to both the group and trainings had time to develop **new and creative programs**.

In particular, the training we initially provided to custodial staff has now been redeveloped into a **Debriefing Series**. We had actually run a few sessions of this the previous year, but this time around we have focused on the staff in the management unit to give them a space to explore the impacts of their work in a trauma-informed way. This will be getting under way mid-August 2022.

The group currently under development and preparing to be delivered at the end of August focuses on creating a safe place for participants to reflect, connect and healing through trauma-informed practices that support creativity, choice, and empowerment.

There will education around trauma and its impacts, but also experiential activities to help participants move and incorporate their mind, body, and emotions with the guidance of the facilitators.

We were also lucky to have **two new additions to the team** in the final quarter of the year with an 0.6EFT (increased to a 0.8EFT) Counsellor/Advocate and a newly funded position of a Therapeutic Case Manager (TCM). The TCM was only briefly funded (four months) as a pilot project to provide evidence of both the gaps in support for women and gender diverse people exiting prison and the identified need.

You know your stuff. You give me a lot to think about.

You started a change in the rest of my life, and I can't thank you enough.

SPOTLIGHT ON DPFC

In the four months the TCM was with us, she was able to provide a service to 40 people both in and out of prison, and she had received some positive feedback about this unique extra layer of support:

To the TCM from a young and highly complex client struggling with substance use and unable to navigate safe relationships when back in the community:

"I really like talking to you. Can you please keep calling me from time to time? I don't think I can do counselling, but having a chat really helps"

- The TCM agreed to stay in contact
- this particular client was hard to reach often, but she would herself call in to talk. This enhanced engagement is demonstrating the need for flexibility for people who are struggling with many complex and intersecting barriers and tailoring the support to what will assist them at particular times

To the TCM after following up with a client in the community we did not get to see in DPFC:

- the client thanked the TCM for continuing to call and check in
- The TCM made a community-based referral for her to Orange Door, which has been followed up.
- The client stated she would like for the TCM to continue to support her in the community alongside her ACSO worker.
- She also stated she liked the contact from WestCASA and that she finds it easy to talk with the TCM and she can say things how they are.

The service is highly valued by our client group, and we are looking forward to continuing to provide this unique program into the next year and beyond.

I couldn't have gotten through that without your support.

I'm so happy. Look at me, I can't stop smiling

Client was overjoyed at having an in-person appointment for the first time (met C/A over zoom).

Thank you, I really appreciate you and respect you. Your appointments are the only ones I remember.

It's hard to build trust with people, but I had instant comfort with you.

I know I have you. I know you care. And that helps me.

I am so relieved to see you, there is so much loss in this prison and I have been struggling through all my grief and I just wanted to see you for your support.

A client who has lost many people in her life through suicide dealing with her own struggles around suicidal ideation.

I like the way you explain things. You make it easy to understand.

I used to think this stuff [counselling] was BS, but now I see how much sense it makes.

Client talking about counselling/ exploring her childhood and adolescent experiences

I'm so grateful that I got to see you all this time. It was good for me, and I learned so much about myself.

POEM: THE EARTH SAYS

The earth says

keep still

stay put & listen to the roar of silence

hold on & root deep for treasure

feel the sap rising through your bones

wait & see what happens

The river says

keep flowing

into the lochs swirling & swelling & swishing

keep floating down down & down

falling & carving the mountains

down to the beautiful sea

The trees say

keep rooting

rooting & rising into sky –

spread out your arms to embrace everything

breathe deep deeper with each falling leaf

gather fruit & nuts for winter

The sky says

keep looking

sniff the air & notice the small

changes moment by moment

breath by breath cloud by cloud

watching your thoughts float by

The birds say

keep singing sing from your heart

fly from branch to branch

stay curious - stay light - start fresh

each year with a new nest then be patient

& sit on your eggs till they hatch

The sun says

keep smiling

smile at your reflection on still water

from dawn to dusk go outside

out to play with light & shadow

in the day long dazzle leaping through thin air

The compost heap says

keep rotting

decomposing – turning - burning

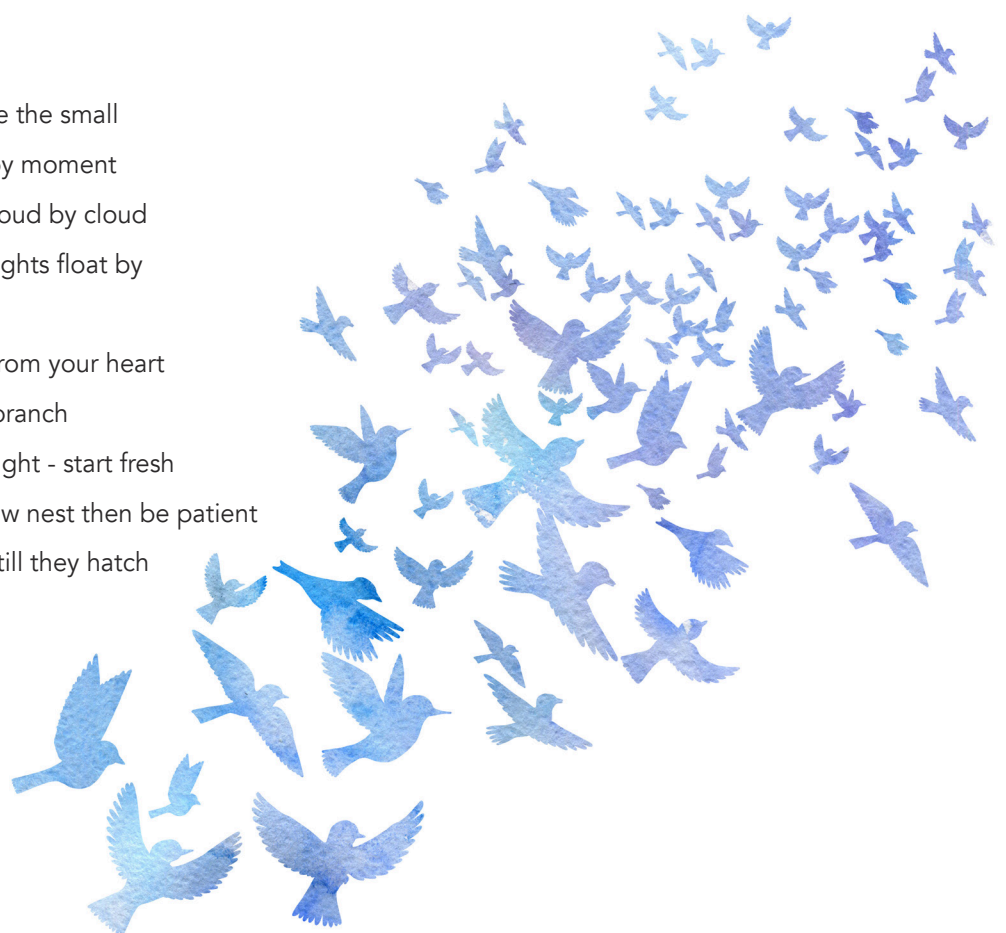
digest everything that comes your way

keep returning to the earth

& the earth returns tenfold to you

the earth says keep still stay put

wait & see what happens next



FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS (*names have been substituted for privacy)



"I don't think I could speak any higher of Jessie if I tried. When I started with WestCASA, I felt very lost and like I would never be able to get over certain obstacles I had, I was holding myself back and was my own worst enemy, full of doubt and had hundreds of walls up and never wanted to let anyone in.

Throughout the time I've had with Jessie those walls have been broken down, my belief in myself has changed and I've overcome some truly amazing obstacles that I never ever thought I would be able to do.

One of the biggest standouts is my ability to ground myself now when I'm having a triggering moment. I have especially taken well to Havening as a preferred method of self-calming. Jessie has taught me it's okay to still have bad days and I just need to take it one step at a time and accept the small wins for what they are, wins. I have now created a mason jar with little bits of paper of small wins I've made, and I've colour coded them into wins I've made prior to commencing my sessions with Jessie (Yellow) and those after commencing my sessions with Jessie (Blue).

Our session yesterday 17/8/2022 was especially hard and I was terrified about bringing back up trauma memories that I had worked extremely hard to suppress, but Jessie made me feel unbelievably safe and calm and guided me through the process. I even blew myself away with going from a 10/10 distress level and feeling like I was going to pass out and sweating buckets, to leaving with a 1/10 distress level and shaking it all off at the end of the session and leaving the building so proud of myself and knowing I am A SURVIVOR NOT A VICTIM.

I have been in therapy since I was 13 years old and I'm now 25 and have been linked with NorthCASA when I was working in Fairfield which was a good experience, but I've never clicked with anyone like I do Jessie and never felt like I can really get through my trauma, but that entire mindset has changed.

I get so excited for my CASA session even though I know they are going to be hard, and flashbacks may arise which they certainly have but it also presents a new talking point for my partner and I which I'm so thankful for!

I'll never ever be able to find the words to express how thankful I am for WestCASA and for Jessie, I feel as though I have gone through a mini rebirth now and I'm a better Mum and Partner for that.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Thank you for celebrating my wins with my Jessie, you are fantastic at what you do, and I count my lucky stars every day that you are my counsellor and we've had this journey together."

*Kindest Regards, Alice**

"I am sending this to express, recognise and address the amazing job Victoria is doing. I would like to mention the professionalism and respect that Victoria performs within her role. Victoria always covers all bases and chases everything up in an extremely fast and timely matter, I am always provided with the correct, helpful and useful information.

Victoria goes above and beyond in her role, I would really like her work to be recognised and acknowledged. You have a really amazing woman representing your organisation in the best way possible."

*Regards, Bev**



FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS (*names have been substituted for privacy)

My name is Jasper,* and I'm currently receiving treatment from Jessie. I came to learn about WestCASA last year during what was the hardest time in my life, and it hasn't been an easy one. A lot of the details from this period are foggy and I can't remember exactly how I found out about your service. I know that I went in to talk to someone from SOCIT at some point, and I know I was on your waitlist before I ended up in the hospital.

I found myself in a psychiatric ward last year after someone had called the police, worried that I was going to take my life. I was in extreme distress, and struggling deeply with the experiences and aftermath of an abusive relationship, a story that unfortunately I imagine is told time and time again at CASA.

Still struggling after my hospital stay I called WestCASA and explained what had happened, how severe my symptoms were, and that it had reached crisis point. The person I spoke to was compassionate and kind, and was able to somehow shorten my waiting period somewhat. I don't understand exactly how your waitlist works, but I am forever grateful.

Going to therapy has always been hard. Not because of an unwillingness to go, but because of the hope I felt starting, and then heartbreak and disappointment I've experienced time and time again with various practitioners.

I've seen psychiatrists who are cold and clinical, and psychologists that I either couldn't connect with, spent most of the session trying to turn off their printer after accidentally printing something 50 times, or who were nice people with good intention but had the involvement and presence of a beige landlord special.

Having the opportunity to work with Jessie has changed my quality of life. She's far from the brick wall that I was scared I'd face again, and I don't think I've laughed so much in therapy (though there have of course been many tears).

I struggle a lot with being told to do things, exercises and tasks, without understanding why. Jessie has been able to help me understand what's happening in my brain and nervous system however and explains why we do what we do. She uses a balance of scientific terminology and accessible vocabulary that allows me to understand there's a reason I am the way that I am without it being over complicated.

She works with me and the barriers I face such as poor memory and executive dysfunction, and makes sessions engaging with interesting practices, whiteboard diagrams, and interactive activities.

Side note: you should have seen my friend's reaction when I told them I spent a session telling a story in a sandbox. Everyone wants sandbox time apparently.

During this time, I was also trialling a new medication, which is a process that has its own struggles and is something she factored in. I now have a far better understanding of emotional regulation and the window of tolerance, as well as regulation exercises I can use to try and bring myself back to my body. They've helped me with the heavy dissociation I experience.

I now use, methods such as breathing, bilateral stimulation, and sometimes the "Safe Place" she helped me create in my mind, in my personal life.

When I need to use physical methods in the therapy space, she does them with me because as she's said, "they regulate me too."

It makes me feel humanised and like we're in it together instead of a subject being observed.

The ability to understand some of what's happening in my mind and body eases the confusion, complete hopelessness, and frustration towards myself that I can feel, which then allows me to sit with it and be kinder to myself while I try to move through it.

She keeps the sessions focused, which is not something I've experienced before for a variety of reasons.

We start the session and she already has a plan for what we'll be working on that day unless there's something I really need to address, in which case she helps me stay on track.

She's set boundaries once when I struggled to engage, and she did it with a combination of compassion and assertiveness that was what I needed to hear. It did me good.

Jessie has been my favourite and most effective mental health care professional I've turned to for help.

I became distressed originally knowing that my time with this service, and her, is so limited. She helped me work through that too.

I know that under different accessibility circumstances there is so much more I work through and learn from her, and will still be very sad come our final session.

But I believe she has provided me with many tools and the knowledge on how to use them going forward, and this will be something I call upon. I know that it doesn't end with her and that she's helped me find a more hopeful path.

WestCASA is a service that I've benefited greatly from, and Jessie is an important factor in the progress I've made. Even when it feels like I'm going backwards. I am so grateful.

I understand that the service is difficult to access due to no fault of your own, and I wish you more funding, more reach, more of everything that could help you help others like myself.

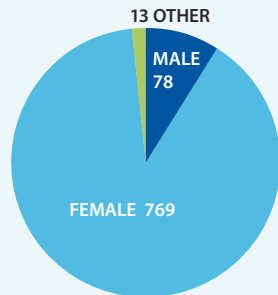
Also maybe a pay rise for Jessie or something, I dunno.

Thank you for being there for those that have experienced horrific trauma, for giving them a place to go that is safe, and for giving hope and the tools they need to build something outside of the pain they've experienced.

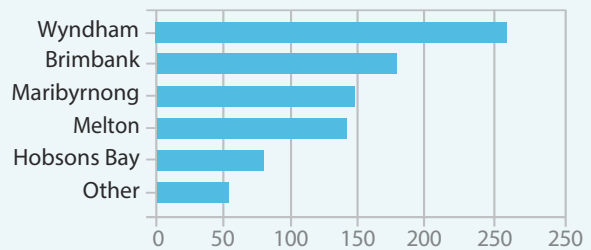


STATISTICS 2021-2022

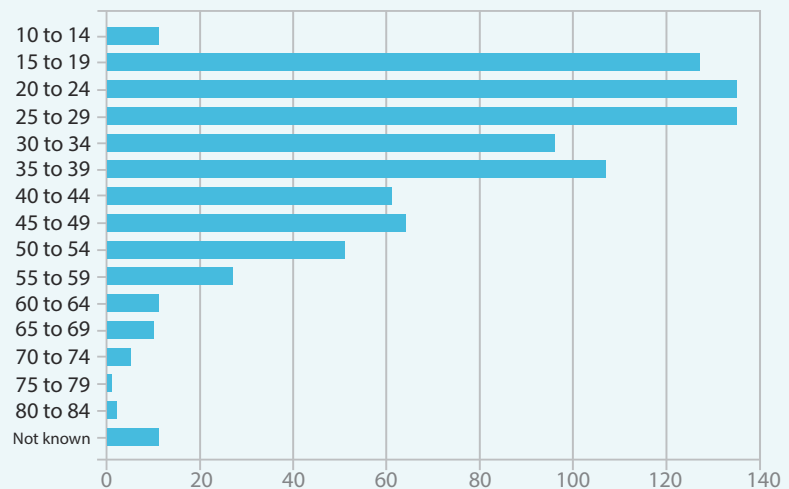
Clients by Gender



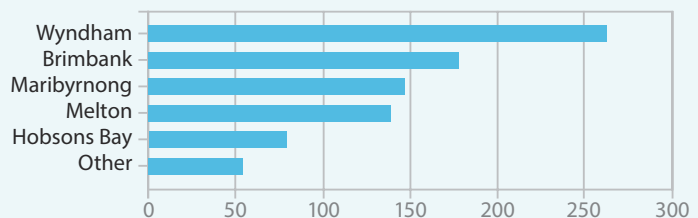
Counselling Location



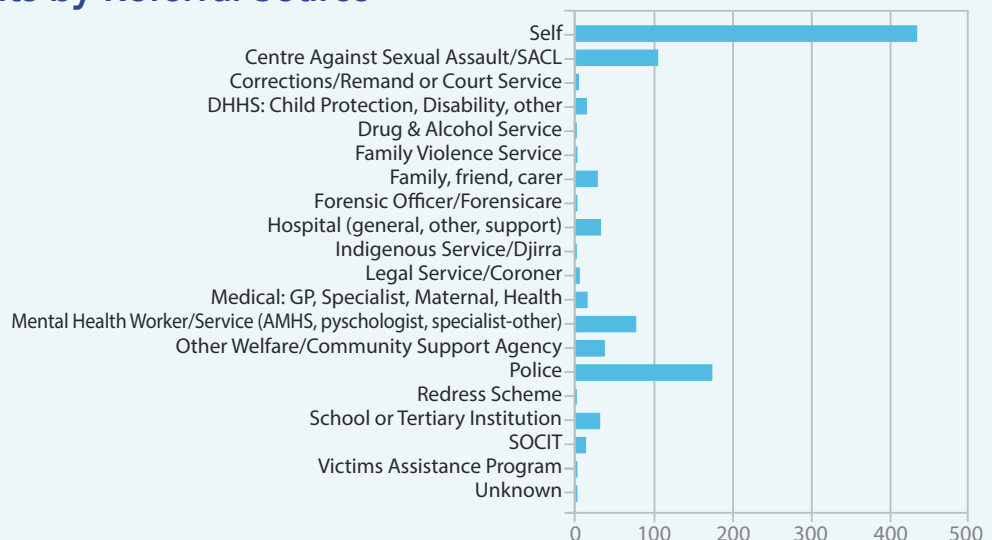
Clients by Age Group



Clients by Local Government Area

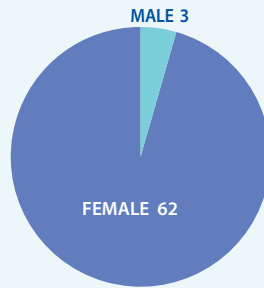


Clients by Referral Source

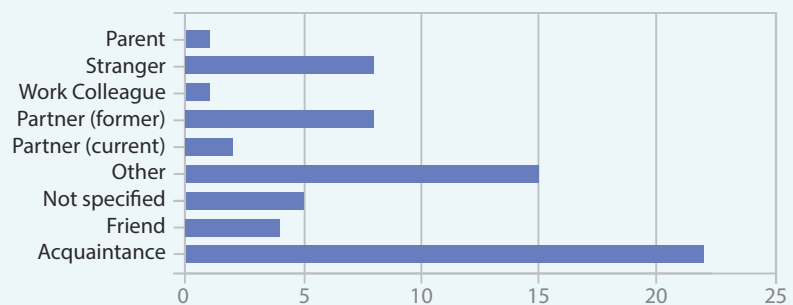


CRISIS CARE UNIT STATISTICS 2021-2022

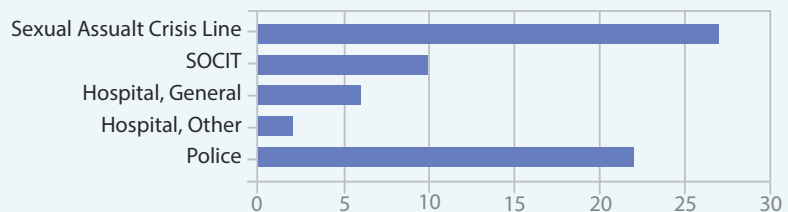
Crisis Care Unit: Presentations by Gender



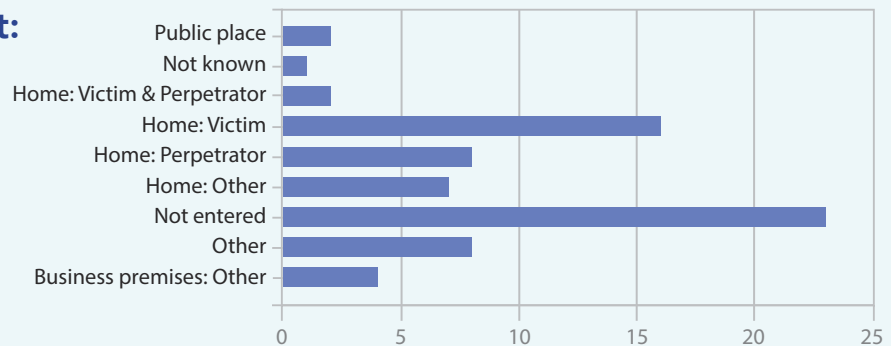
Crisis Care Unit: Perpetrator



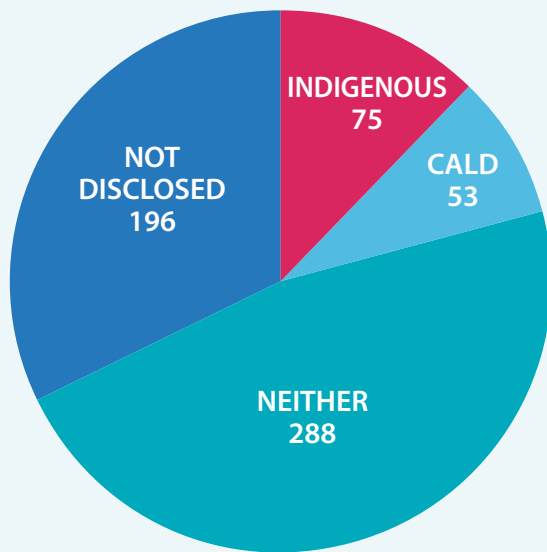
Crisis Care Unit: Referral Source



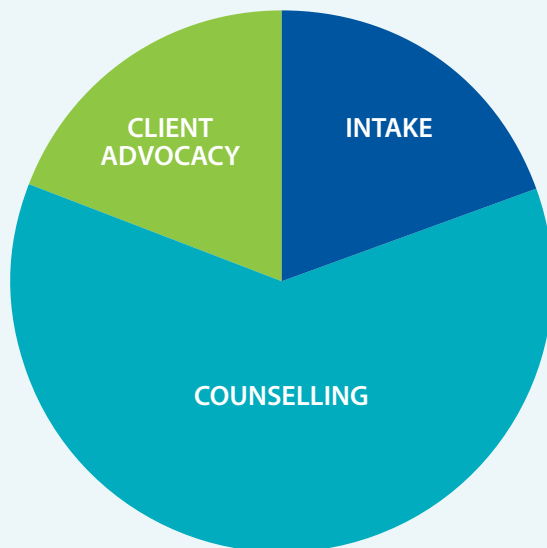
Crisis Care Unit: Location of Assault



DAME PHYLLIS FROST PRISON STATISTICS 2021-2022



**Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
Prison: Diversity of Clients**



**Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
Prison: Service Delivery
Hours**