

# Fact Sheet



## Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Service

### About Waratah Children's Services

Waratah provides free and confidential specialised counselling for children and adolescents who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. Waratah places great value on supporting the whole family through the healing process.

### The Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Service

The Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Service (CSATS) provides counselling and support to children and adolescents up to 18 years old who have experience sexual abuse and those who display problem sexual behaviours, enabling them to work through their experience in a safe space. This service can be accessed either through a self-referral via the phone or through another service provider, for instance your doctor.

### What is Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of dependent children and adolescents in sexual activities with an adult or person older or bigger, where there is a difference in age, size or power, in which the child is used as a sexual object for the gratification of the older person's needs or desires. The child is unable to give informed consent due to the imbalance of power. Sexual activities include all types of sexual encounters and behaviours, including grooming, sexually suggestive language, the use of pornography, touching and/or penetration.

### Some Possible Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

- Changed school performance
- Eating disturbances
- Difficulty forming trust
- Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Increased stomach aches
- Increased head aches
- Clinginess
- Anger and aggression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Self-harm
- Regression in speech
- Regression in behaviour
- Low self esteem
- Difficulty concentrating
- Repetitive sexual talk
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Self-blame
- Soiling and bedwetting
- Anxiety
- Withdrawn and isolated
- Drug and alcohol use
- Running away/truancy



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### **How can I Support my Child?**

- Believe your child and let them know you believe them;
- Tell your child the abuse was not their fault;
- Reassure your child that they have done the right thing by telling you about the abuse;
- Tell them you will do all you can to keep them safe;
- Let them know you still love them;
- Give them time to talk to you at their own pace;
- Explain to your child in words they can understand about any court or legal action that is taking place;
- Try to be calm when talking with your child as they may be confused by your emotions;
- Keep a predictable and consistent routine;
- Be patient with your child's difficult behaviours, this is their way of telling you they are not okay;
- Acknowledge your child's feelings, let them know their feelings are normal and valid;
- Give your child choices – children who have experienced abuse often feel powerless. Try to provide situations where they can have some choice.

### **Support for Parents and Carers**

Waratah recognises that sexual abuse impacts the whole family and the importance of having a safe place to express thoughts and feelings for each member of the family. For this reason we also offer:

- Counselling and support to caregivers – caregivers often have their own feelings about the experiences their child has encountered. Some common feelings expressed by caregiver are anger, guilt, shame and sadness. It is common that feelings related to their own experiences can also arise. Counselling provides a space for their own healing as well as to support their child's healing process.
- Education/Information – Information sessions are offered covering the effects of trauma on children's development and behaviour. These information sessions provide caregivers with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of their child's behaviours and how best to respond. Information sessions are also offered covering the Protective Behaviours WA Program. This is a preventative, like skills program which enables people of all ages and backgrounds to develop skills which promote resilience and empowers them to deal with a range of difficult, unsafe or abusive situations.
- Groups – There may be opportunities for parents and caregivers to attend therapeutic groups where they can meet other parents, caregivers and survivors of sexual abuse.