

# Fact Sheet



## Children's Domestic Violence 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 Children's Domestic Violence Service

This service provides counselling and support to those children who have experienced and/or witnessed domestic violence, enabling them to work through their experience in a safe space. This service takes referrals for children from 5-15 years and can be accessed either through a self-referral via phone or by referral from another service provider, for instance your doctor.

### What is Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is when someone intentionally uses violence, threats, force or intimidations to control or manipulate a family member, partner or former partner. It is characterised by an imbalance of power whereby the perpetrator uses abusive behaviours and tactics to obtain power and control over the victim causing fear. The violence is intentional and systematic and often increases in frequency and severity the longer the relationship goes on.

### Some Possible Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

- 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
- Self-blame
- Soiling and bedwetting
- Anxiety
- Withdrawn and isolated
- Drug and alcohol use
- Running away/truancy

## 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 domestic violence impacts the whole family and the importance of 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 – This service allows caregivers an opportunity to access counselling to support their own safety and 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 domestic violence.