


Establishing a best practice response to victims of sexual assault in North Queensland




SART
SEXUAL ASSAULT
RESPONSE TEAM
TOWNSVILLE REGION




“... ‘survivor’ celebrates the individual,
but ‘victim’ recognises the enormity of
the system we are up against”

(Gupta, 2014).



“And I just lay on the floor sobbing, bleeding...
They wanted me to go to the police to report it and to the hospital.
But I was so scared... the fear this man put into me.
I never did. And I regret that decision now”
(Survivor, Townsville, July 2016).

“I hear the words from survivors of sexual assault... shame and
blame... with words of justification to minimise someone else’s
actions... the stigma associated... men and women who will carry
their secret forever... it will shape their lives forever...
they will suffer in silence because... they did not have...
confidence in the system”
(Social Worker, Townsville Hospital and Health Service, July 2016).



“Sexual assault is a crime of violence.
It is a humiliating and degrading experience.
It has an emotional, physical, financial and social
cost, not only to those directly affected, but also
for the community as a whole”

(Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines, 2014).



Strategic Needs Assessment

“To provide a single access point to shared statistics and data pertaining to sexual assaults in Townsville, to create the most effective model of service delivery.”

Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership (SASP) Plan

“To provide seamless, supportive, integrated sexual assault services to victims in Townsville and the region.”

Departmental report ‘We fall through the cracks in the system’

“To provide a wider analysis and application of the data through privileging the stories of victims of sexual assault and of front line workers who work alongside them, in order to better inform the development of service delivery responses.”

“No police e-referral had been made, nor had the woman been given information about SASS... police said they would contact her to follow up... but never did”

(Sexual Assault Counsellor, June 2016).

“The forensic examination process can be quite detailed and involved... the forensic nurse may not always feel that they can give the victim the emotional support that they require”

(Clinical Forensic Nurse, July 2016).

“I have... seen a mixed response over many years to the management of sexual assault in the hospital setting... Emergency Departments are sometimes dismissive of clients presenting for help”

(Clinical Forensic Nurse, July 2016).

“The overall experience between departments and professions has been frustrating, confusing and distressing... Any project that would enhance the fluidity between agencies... would be an invaluable and effective endeavour”

(Mother of Sexual Assault Survivor, 2014).


Attrition (per 1000 victims)

140 reported

42 prosecuted


8 go to trial

1 conviction

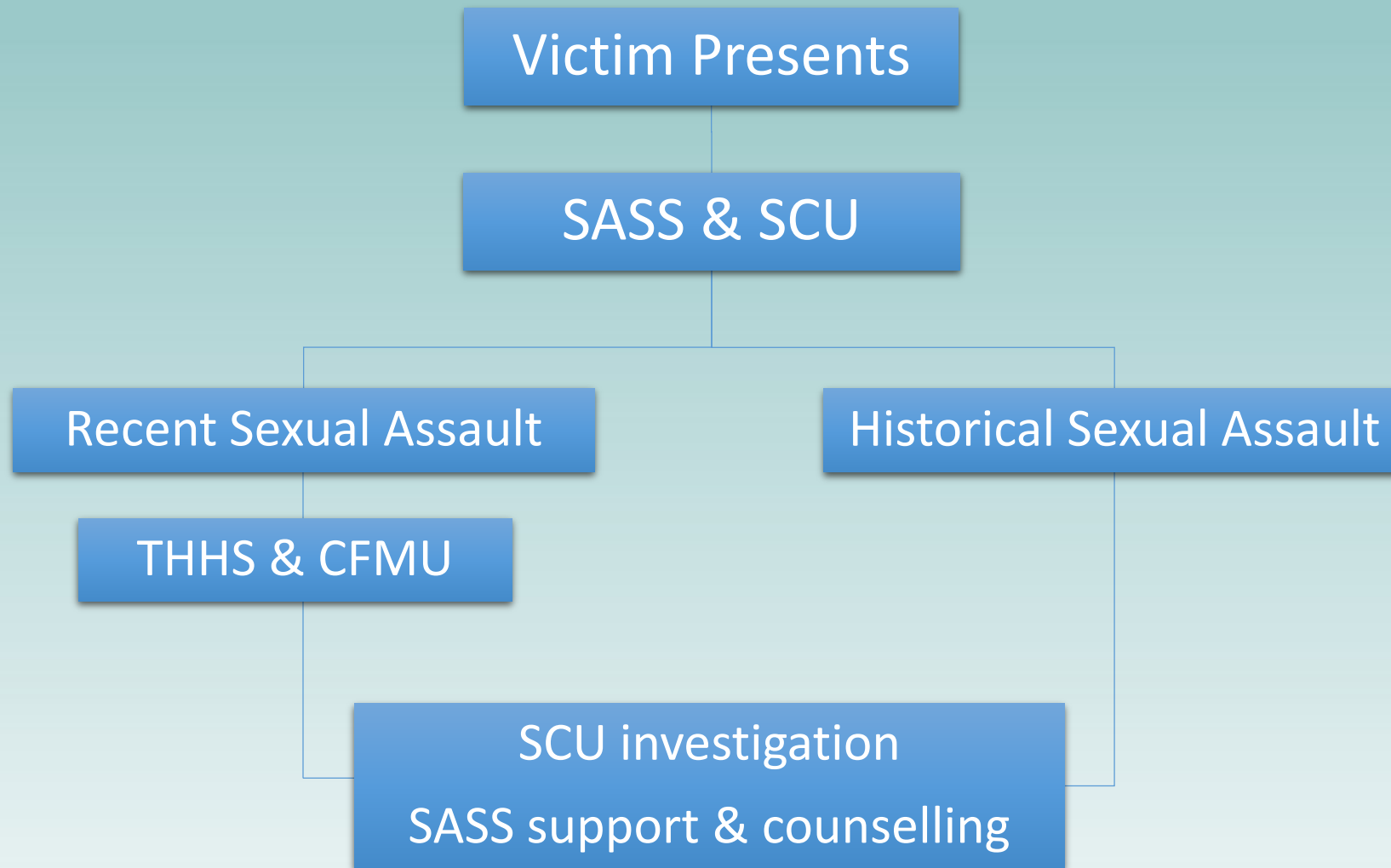


“We would very much like to meet with you all...to best implement procedures for ensuring the victim’s needs are met, while also attending to the requirements of a criminal investigation. With the advent of the dedicated unit to investigate sexual crimes, we hope to improve the way we do business”

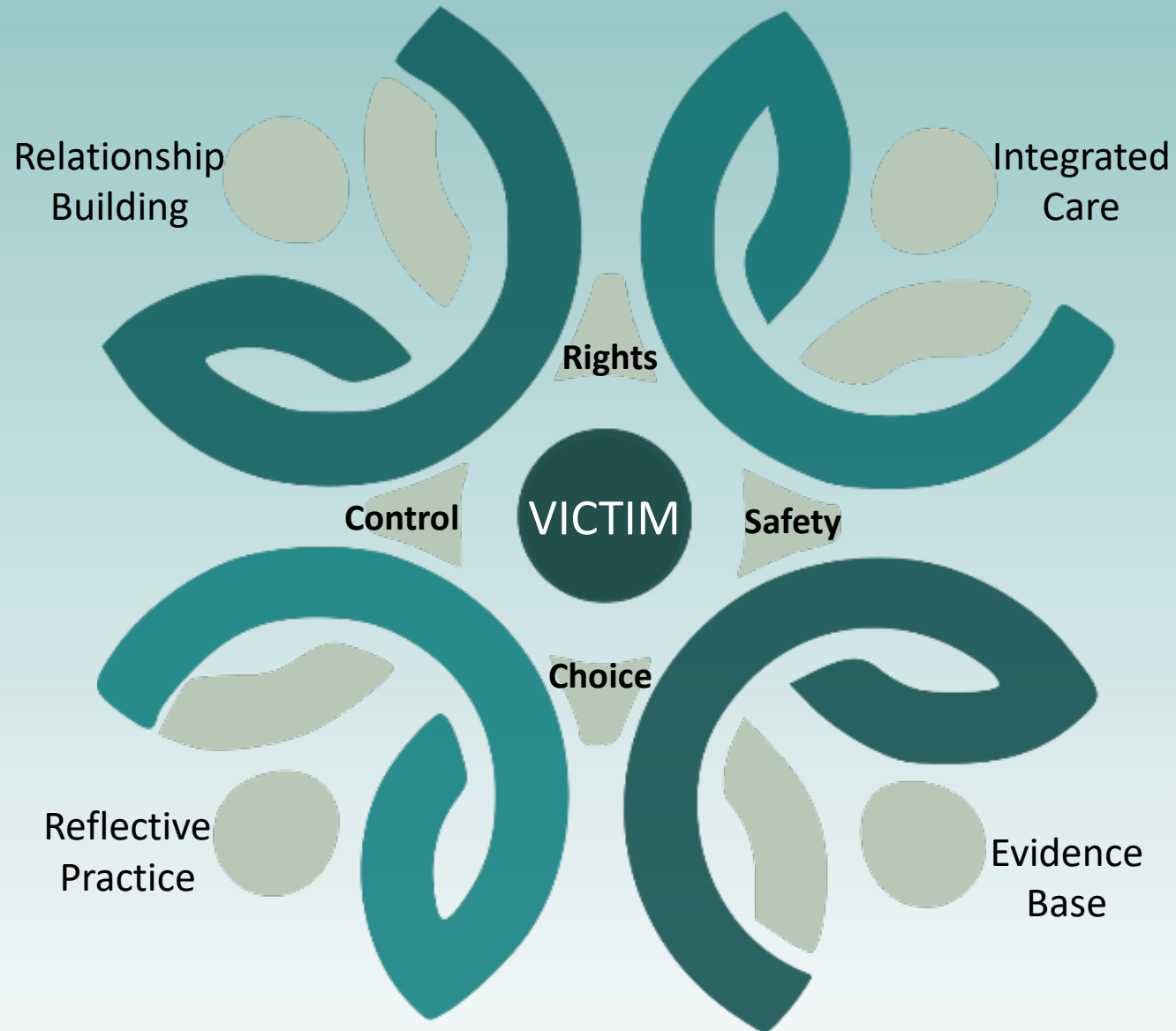
(Detective Senior Sergeant, Sexual Crimes Unit, June 2016).







Trauma and Violence Informed Framework



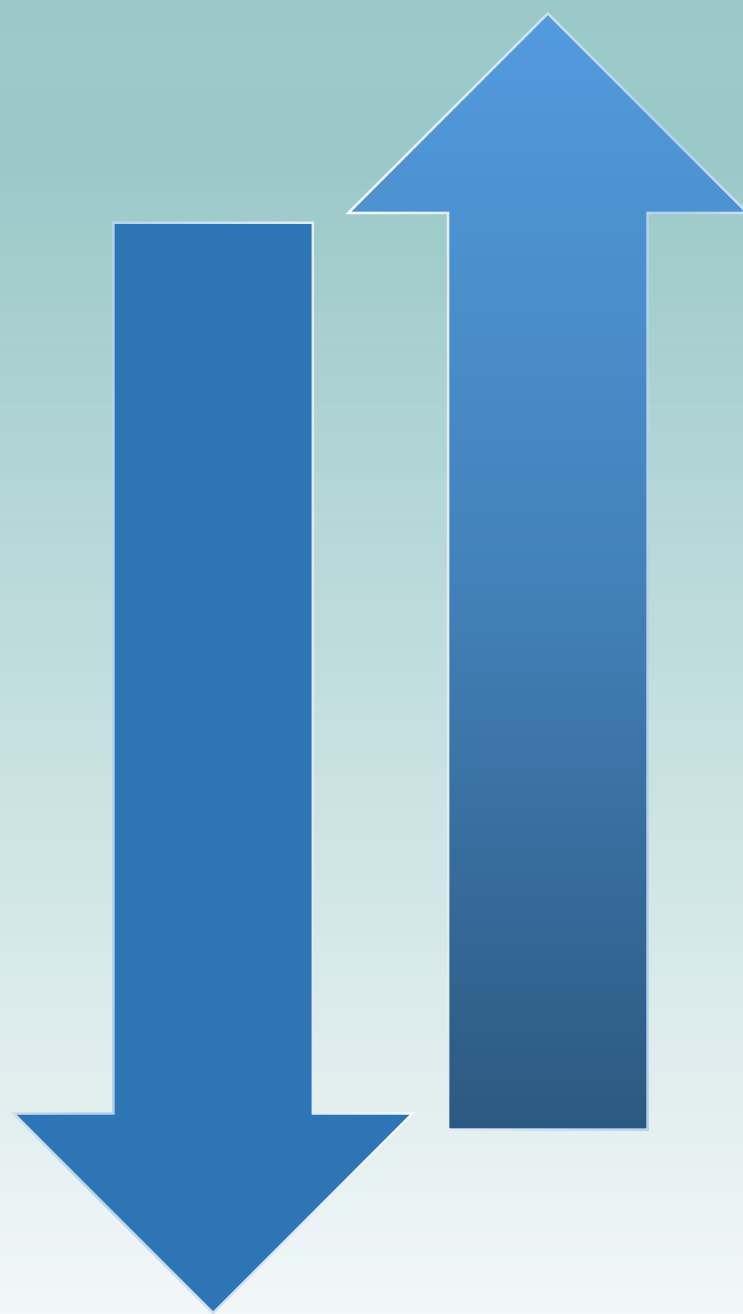


A decrease

Response time

Withdrawal of complaints

Reports of dissatisfaction



An increase

Reported sexual crimes

Completed FME

Support and referrals to SASS

Support to secondary and tertiary victims

Referral for SASS (outreach)

Reported sexual crimes by ATSI people

Identification of sexual assault within DV

Reporting by male victims



“...so relieved to have someone else to help ‘fight’
the system that has let me down...”

“...someone is on my side”

“I felt supported... believed and heard...”

“I did not feel so alone...”

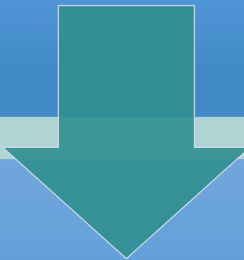
(Survivors, Townsville, 2016).






Development

Pathways document & re-development of brochure
Conferences (Trauma model) & cross-service training
Model for data collection
Strategic Plan



Implementation

Cross-service training
Conference presentations
Strategic Plan
Data collection



Funding

Interagency Program Coordinator position
SASS -24 hour on call work
Two year pilot (Evaluation)

Ahrens, C. (2006). *Being silenced: The impact of negative social reactions on the disclosure of rape*. American Journal of Community Psychology, 38(3–4), 263–274.

Bennett, V. (2016). *Townsville Sexual Assault Strategic Needs Assessment*. Townsville Sexual Assault Support Service, Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership (SASP), Townsville.

Carr, K. (2016). ISACURE Course. Queensland Police Service, Brisbane.

Contarino, T. (July, 2016). *We fall through the cracks in the system: A report on the Townsville Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership*. Townsville Sexual Assault Support Service, Sexual Assault Strategic Partnership (SASP) Townsville.

Gupta, Rahila (16 June, 2014). 'Victim' vs. 'Survivor': Feminism and Language. Retrieved 10 July, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/rahila-gupta/victim-vs-survivor-feminism-and-language>.

Hegarty, K., Tarzia, L., Rees, S., Fooks, A., Forsdike, K., Woodlock, D., Simpson, L., McCormack, C., Amanatidis, S. (2017). *Women's Input into a Trauma-informed systems model of care in Health settings (The WITH Study) Final report (ANROWS Horizons 02/2017)*. Sydney: ANROWS.

KPMG (2009a). *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*. Safety Taskforce, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government.



Lievore, D. (2003). *Non-reporting and Hidden Recording of Sexual Assault: An International Literature Review*. Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, Canberra.

Morrison, Z., Quadara, A. & Boyd, C. (June, 2007). *'Ripple effects' of sexual assault*. Issues: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, No. 7.

Quadara, A. (2015). *Implementing trauma-informed systems of care in health settings: The WITH study*. State of knowledge paper (ANROWS Landscapes, 10/2015). Sydney: ANROWS.

Queensland Government (2014). *Response to sexual assault. Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines for Responding to People who have Experienced Sexual Assault*. Queensland Government, Brisbane.

Queensland Sexual Assault Services (2010). *The Right to Choose: Enhancing Best Practice in responding to Sexual Assault in Queensland*. QSAS, Brisbane

Varcoe, C., Wathen, C., Ford-Gilboe, M., Syme, V., & Browne, A. (2016). VEGA briefing note: Trauma and violence-informed care. Retrieved from Violence Evidence Guidance Action Project website <http://projectvega.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/VEGA-TVIC-Briefing-Note-2016.pdf>.

World Health Organisation (January, 2016). Violence Against Women. Fact Sheet N239. Retrieved 13 July, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

