



GOLD COAST CENTRE
against sexual violence inc.

Crime Inquiry 2014
Submission 054

Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

**Submission to Research Director, Legal Affairs and
Community Safety Committee, Parliament House, George
Street, Brisbane QLD 4000**

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1 Introduction

The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. welcomes the opportunity to make a submission specifically in regard to sexual violence to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in relation to the *Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland*.

1.1 Sexual violence

Sexual violence is perhaps the most committed, least reported and least punished of all crimes. The ABS Personal Safety Survey (2006) found that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years. In 2012 it was estimated that 51, 000 persons aged 18 years and over were victims of sexual assault and less than a third of these reported to the police (ABS, 2013).

International and national studies have consistently shown that there is a significant under reporting of sexual violence, that only a small proportion of offences reported are prosecuted, and an even smaller percentage of those result in a conviction. One study found that more than 90 per cent of reported rapes did not result in convictions and only 17 per cent ended up in court (Fitzgerald:2006).

Across Australia it is estimated that less than 20 percent of sexual offences reported to police result in criminal proceedings being instigated (AIS: 2007).

Unfortunately sexual violence is crime that exists in Queensland. Whilst holding offenders accountable and working towards the elimination of sexual violence; it is imperative that we develop a system that respects the experiences of victim/survivors rather than compound their distress, that we ensure that there is no place for secondary victimisation within the systems that we create.

Queensland's current criminal justice system response to sexual crimes is typified by low reporting rates, high attrition rates, experience of secondary trauma and low conviction rates. Despite legislative change over the past two decades, the process and outcomes for victim/survivors have not dramatically improved. The lack of information, lack of control, lack of support and lack of choice encountered throughout the system reinforces the victim/survivor's powerlessness.

In Queensland, sexual offence matters currently sit within the criminal justice framework. There is a strong argument for specialisation within current court system to exclusively deal with sexual offences in order to minimise secondary victimisation for the complainant and to maximise conviction rates. However, specialised courts alone can not address all of the current issues in relation to sexual offences. The experiences of other jurisdictions show that specialised courts need to be set within a broader context of training, education and integrated responses to sexual violence by the criminal justice system and support services.

It is time for Queensland to re-think the way that sexual violence is prosecuted. Weston-Scheuber (2011, p.19) contends "How do we balance the need for fairness to the accused with the need for justice for the victim? Can the former continue to trump the latter so thoroughly and spectacularly? Or is it perhaps time to rebalance the scales?"

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence believes that all Queenslanders deserve to live in safety, that no one deserves to be sexually violated and that victims must have access to justice. We cannot build a safer community unless sexual offenders are held accountable for their crimes.

1.2 Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc.

GCCASV (formerly Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service) was founded in 1990 to deliver specialist sexual violence intervention and prevention programs to the Gold Coast community. It is a community based, community controlled charitable organisation funded by Department of Communities, Disability and Child Safety. Run by women for women, the agency services the geographic area from Coolangatta to Upper Coomera. The organisation provides a safe, supportive, woman-centred environment in which sexual assault survivors can become aware of their own strengths and gain confidence and control of their lives.

Mission Statement

The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. will provide all women and young women in the Gold Coast Community access to a comprehensive array of services and programs designed to prevent victimisation, offer crisis intervention, provide ongoing counselling and support services that will assist women to recover from the impact of violence.

Services provided

To survivors of immediate and/or past sexual violence

- Crisis support
- Ongoing professional counselling
- Support through the criminal justice system
- Support through related legal and medical processes
- Therapeutic and educational groups

To Friends and Family

- Information and support for partners, friends and relatives of women who have experienced sexual violence

To General Community

- Resource information developed and disseminated
- Information on legal and medical issues in relation to sexual violence
- Public education campaigns
- Anti-violence presentations to students and the community
- Training to other professionals

Director

Di Macleod is currently the Director of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. which she founded in 1990. She was also instrumental in the development of both the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service and Macleod Accommodation Support Service, which is named after her. Di has over 30 years of experience in the area of domestic and sexual violence including working as a care provider, counsellor, refuge worker, court support worker, educator, trainer, service manager and consultant.

She was an inaugural board member of the Australian National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence and a member of the Queensland Attorney General's Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code.

2 Summary of Recommendations

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence makes the following key recommendations in relation to possible strategies to enhance the quality and capacity of system responses, increase collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders in the CJS, increase victim/survivor satisfaction, decrease secondary victimisation and increase conviction rates.

- 1 That police undergo competency based training in understanding and responding to sexual violence and that this training includes a strong attitudinal component.
- 2 That Queensland Police Service explore the possibility of training in Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview techniques which have been successful in the USA.
- 3 That victims of sexual crimes be given the choice to have an immediate forensic examination with forensic material stored and delayed release to the police.
- 4 That research is conducted on the reasons for not commencing criminal proceedings following a police investigation and the reasons for prosecutions being discontinued.
- 5 That Queensland adopt a list management approach utilising dedicated courts, a dedicated sexual offences list with case managers to monitor and track cases to ensure resolution of matters within defined time frames.
- 6 That access to a free qualified interpreter is available when a victim is reporting sexual crimes to the police and where possible to retain the same interpreter throughout the criminal justice process.
- 7 That dedicated funding is allocated to sexual assault services for trained sexual violence counsellor/advocates to support the complainant through the criminal justice system and beyond.
- 8 That there be a presumption that adult complainants in sexual crimes will be treated as special witnesses and give evidence via CCTV unless they choose to enter the courtroom.
- 9 That the Queensland government reforms legislation on counselling privilege to protect the privacy of victim/survivors in line with other states and territories.
- 10 That the concept of trained specialist sexual violence units is researched with a view to implementation.
- 11 That collaborative multidisciplinary models be explored aimed at improving service quality and support for victim/survivors.
- 12 That compulsory, ongoing training be provided to dedicated prosecutors, court staff, magistrates and judges on the nature and impact of sexual violence.
- 13 That utilising promising practice from other jurisdictions a pilot site for a dedicated court with trained specialist staff and a managed sexual crimes list is developed and evaluated with a view to being rolled out across the state.
- 14 That successful overseas alternatives to the current criminal justice system be investigated with a view to trialling in Queensland.
- 15 That Queensland police undertake training to recognise and respond to sexual violence in intimate relationships and furthermore that both civil and criminal action is taken where sexual violence is disclosed.
- 16 That Queensland police undertake training to recognise and respond to sexual violence in the context of elder abuse.
- 17 That the Queensland government fund sexual violence prevention initiatives consistent with the *National Plan To Reduce Violence Against Women And Their Children* and *National Sexual Assault Prevention Standards*.
- 18 That a multi-disciplinary working party of stakeholders is formed with representatives drawn from police, ODPP, sexual violence services, forensic medical officers and victim/survivors to review and improve the criminal justice system response to sexual violence.

3 Overview and critique of current Queensland practice

3.1 Reporting to police

Women have identified lack of faith in the system and fear of secondary victimisation as key reasons for not reporting sexual crimes committed against them (Taskforce on Women & the Criminal Code: 1999).

For the small percentage that chooses to enter the criminal justice system their journey begins with reporting to the police. Research shows that victim/survivors (particularly recent) generally feel more comfortable describing the crime with someone of a different gender than the offender (Rich and Seffrin, 2012; Temkin & Krahe, 2008). However rostering limitations and lack of police resources mean there is no guarantee that an officer of the preferred gender will be available making the process difficult from the outset for some victims.

However, gender is not the most important factor, empathy, attitude, language and body language of the interviewing officer is critical. Victims can be hypersensitive and will pick up on any negative attitude and language. Victims will often say that the police officer did not believe them. This can result in becoming disengaged and withdrawing the complaint.

Specialised training is necessary to improve the quality of police interviewing and the taking of statements. The evidence collected by trained specialist police is more likely to be useful for prosecution, leading to higher rates of prosecution and conviction. Research shows that both skill and attitude of the police officer will have an impact on the quality of the interaction with the complainant and the quality of the interview. Competency based police training in interviewing techniques must include a strong attitudinal component. Although sexual assault training is important, attitudes towards rape and rape victims are more important. Research shows that rape myth acceptance is a significant predictor of interviewing skill. Specialist officers recruited to work in this area should have low rape myth acceptance and superior interviewing skills (Rich and Seffrin: 2012).

Recommendation 1

That police undertake compulsory competency based training in understanding and responding to sexual violence and that this training includes a strong attitudinal component.

3.2 Police interview

Police interviews in Queensland have followed the same format for many years. Police have been trained to obtain who, what, where, why, when and how from the victim. However, collecting information in this manner actually inhibits memory and accuracy of the details provided. This is because trauma victims do not experience trauma in the in the same way most of us experience a non-traumatic event (Strand: 2012).

Overseas jurisdictions are having success with new ways of interviewing traumatised victims to assist them to recall accurate information. The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview has already been proven to be invaluable in the investigation and prosecution of many forms of violence including child and adult sexual assault (Strand: 2012).

In USA, the Office on Violence Against Women is partnering with the International Association of Chiefs of Police to provide training for police on how to conduct trauma informed sexual assault interviews (The White House Council on Women and Girls: 2014).

Recommendation 2

That Queensland Police Service explore the possibility of training in Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview techniques which have been successful in the USA.

3.3 Forensic medical

Interaction with police will be typically be followed by a forensic medical which in Queensland is most often performed by a Government Forensic Medical Officer. Again there may be no choice about the gender of the medical examiner. Many women find an internal examination quite intrusive, but after being sexually violated this process can be very difficult and particularly distressing.

The choice to store forensic material whilst a victim/survivor makes an informed decision about proceeding through the criminal justice system is not available throughout Queensland despite protocols being in place for many years (Queensland Health: 2001).

Victims are expected to make a choice about whether or not to report to police when they are in shock or traumatised. They are not in the position of being able to make an informed choice at this time. If they decide to report later the police will be concerned that there is no forensics and the case may not progress. There should be an option of having a forensic medical and delaying the decision to formally report to police until they are physically and emotionally ready. This is routine in other jurisdictions in Australia.

Recommendation 3

That victims of sexual crimes be given the choice to have an immediate forensic examination with forensic material stored and delayed release to the police.

3.4 High attrition rates

Daly and Bouhours (2010: p.565) state “victimisation surveys show that 14 percent of sexual violence victims report the offense to the police. Of these, only 30 percent proceed to prosecution, 20 percent are adjudicated in court, 12.5 percent are convicted of any sexual offense, and 6.5 percent are convicted of the original offense charged.”

It would seem that cases fitting rape mythology such as those committed by a stranger and where physical injuries are sustained by the victim/survivor are more likely to proceed and gain conviction. However, there is often a lack of responsiveness by police to vulnerable and marginalised women. Typically women who are marginalised by race, culture, disability, mental illness, and addiction, or those who have been assaulted by an intimate partner, or been drinking prior to the sexual violence, will find that their cases do not proceed.

If the case fails to proceed to court this will usually have a negative impact on the victim/survivor who may not really understand why this is so. Most victim/survivors believe that once they have given their statement the accused will be arrested and charged and the court case will commence in a timely manner. Victim/survivors and their support persons should be

provided with ongoing information about case progression and careful explanation about reasons for a decision not to prosecute.

Stewart (2013) found that overall Queensland experienced a 25% reduction in Adult Sex Offences committed to the District and Supreme Courts comparing 2009/10 to 2012/2013 for "*no apparent reason*". There has also been an approximate 50% reduction in Child Sex Offences committed to the District and Supreme Courts comparing 2009/2010 to 2012-2013. This is cause for concern and warrants further exploration.

The leniency of sentences for sexual offending is often questioned by the complainant and the community is very vocal in relation to perceived lenient sentences. In the light of such a huge attrition rate through the system what should arguably be of more concern are those who may have escaped conviction through not being charged or prosecuted.

Recommendation 4

That research is conducted on the reasons for not commencing criminal proceedings following a police investigation and the reasons for prosecutions being discontinued.

3.5 Time delays

After reporting to police and the forensic examination there will typically be a period of waiting - waiting for contact from the police, waiting to see if charges are laid, waiting for medical results, waiting for information about what happens next.

If charges are laid there may be a bail application and several mentions or adjournments in court where the complainant does not need to appear, however because of ad-hoc communication she may not even be aware of what is happening.

If the case goes to committal there will inevitably be a time delay and she may or may not be required to appear. If the case is committed to trial there will be further delays sometimes years after the offence was first reported to police. This time delay leaves what many victim/survivors have described as "a cloud hanging over my head" affecting memory, healing and engagement with the criminal justice process. Some victim/survivors want to withdraw and "try and get on with their lives". These time delays impact on the administration of justice.

Recommendation 5

That Queensland adopt a list management approach utilising dedicated courts, a dedicated sexual offences list with case managers to monitor and track cases to ensure resolution of matters within defined time frames.

3.6 Access to interpreters

In cases where English is not the complainant's first language, she will need to request an interpreter as access to an interpreter is not an automatic right for a complainant whereas it is for the accused. Most complainants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are not afforded an interpreter when reporting to the police. Sometimes a sworn police officer with a basic knowledge of the language is used. Sometimes the Telephone Interpreter service is used.

Over the course of time the complainant may have numerous people translate for her. This becomes problematic as the chances of different English words being used by the different interpreters increases and this can be perceived as inconsistencies in the victim's account.

Recommendation 6

That access to a free qualified interpreter is available when a victim is reporting sexual crimes to the police and where possible to retain the same interpreter throughout the criminal justice process.

3.7 Funded court support

The complainant will usually need support to attend court as to them it is a foreign environment using a foreign language and unknown rules. However, there is no funded specialist court support for adult victim/survivors in Queensland. The complainant is often reluctant to ask family and friends to accompany her as she doesn't want to put them through it, for them to hear the horrific details and she often feels embarrassed and ashamed (Macleod et al: 2012).

At court there can be physical and emotional safety issues where encounters with the offender and his supporters often occur. These encounters are typically outside the entrance to the building, inside in the lifts or hallways and can be particularly intimidating for victim/survivors. A support person to accompany them can provide some practical assistance and reduce anxiety.

Through counselling, education and information, a support worker can liaise with police and ODPP, prepare a complainant for court and introduce techniques to maximise emotional safety, minimise the chances of being overwhelmed and provide de-briefing.

A well informed, well supported complaint is less likely to want to withdraw from the system. Both police and prosecutions have expressed concern that victims of sexual offences are not sufficiently supported during the prosecution process and that community support services for adult victims were rare. Some police believed that the unavailability of quality support services may contribute to many complainants not seeing the court process through (CMC: 2008).

Support and advocacy should be available as a right not a privilege before, during and after the first point at which the victim/survivor enters the criminal justice system to the end of the process and beyond.

Recommendation 7

That dedicated funding is allocated to sexual assault services for trained sexual violence counsellor/advocates to support the complainant through the criminal justice system and beyond.

3.8 Special witness consideration

Many victim/survivors are fearful of entering the courtroom and seeing the offender. Whilst there is a mandatory provision for an affected child witness to be supported and to give evidence via audio visual links and/or the use of screens in Queensland there is no automatic right for adult complainants.

In order to have a support person in court, to have a screen or to give evidence from outside the court room the victim/survivor will need to make a request under Section 21A of the Evidence Act 1977 which may or may not be granted (Macleod et al: 2012).

Most victim/survivors feel that they meet the criteria for a special witness as defined under Evidence Act 1977 particularly Subsection 2 (b) (ii) would be likely to suffer severe emotional trauma and also Subsection 2 (b) (iii) would be likely to be so intimidated by the defendant as to be disadvantaged as a witness. However they can be persuaded by police or prosecutors not to have a screen or give remote evidence and therefore special witness consideration is not requested. Therefore in Queensland most adult complainants have to face the offender in court.

To reduce fear of being in the presence of the offender in some jurisdictions there is a presumption that adult complainants in sexual offence matters will be treated as special witnesses and give their evidence via CCTV unless they choose to enter the courtroom. Where this is available it is important to ensure that the Court has the technological equipment available and that it is fully operational (Quinn: 2011).

In NSW, the adult complainant is entitled to have a support person or persons present when giving evidence and in New South Wales, most adult complainants now choose to give evidence by way of CCTV (Wilkins: 2011).

In Victoria, there is a presumption that the complainant will give evidence by alternative means such as CCTV unless an application is made by the prosecution for them to give evidence in Court.

Additionally consideration needs to be given to separate entrance and separate waiting rooms to avoid contact with the defendant and/or his supporters in the public areas of the courthouse.

Recommendation 8

That there be a presumption that adult complainants in sexual crimes will be treated as special witnesses and give evidence via CCTV unless they choose to enter the courtroom.

3.9 Lack of sexual violence communications privilege

Sexual violence communications are communications made in the course of a confidential relationship between the victim/survivor of sexual violence and a counsellor. The defence may seek access to this material to assist with their preparation for trial and for use during cross-examination of the complainant and other witnesses.

If at any point in proceedings it is revealed that the victim/survivor has sought counselling then her counselling records may be subpoenaed. Legislation to protect sexual assault counselling communications from unrestricted access by the defence has been introduced in all states and territories **except** Queensland (Fileborn: 2011).

Therefore, the defence in Queensland sexual offence trials has virtually unrestricted access to a victim's private counselling records. This invasion of privacy has a negative impact on victims and an impact on the sexual violence services that provide counselling.

Recommendation 9

That the Queensland government reforms legislation on counselling privilege to protect the privacy of victim/survivors in line with other states and territories.

3.10 Low conviction rates

Daly and Bouhours (2010: p.565) state “victimisation surveys show that 14 percent of sexual violence victims report the offense to the police. Of these, only 30 percent proceed to prosecution, 20 percent are adjudicated in court, 12.5 percent are convicted of any sexual offense, and 6.5 percent are convicted of the original offense charged.”

These poor outcomes are likely to have contributed to a lack of community confidence in the criminal justice system. In the community there is a strong belief that the legal system does not treat victims/survivors well and that there are considerable difficulties in reporting, progressing through the criminal justice system and obtaining a conviction. Much of this information has been gleaned from the negative experience and poor outcomes reported by victim/survivors.

Many victim/survivors enter the legal process focussed on the scenario of a guilty verdict and a custodial sentence for the accused. Therefore when a “not guilty” verdict is returned they are shocked, disappointed and feel disbelieved (Macleod et al: 2012).

There is a need to educate victims about what to realistically expect from the system and a need to educate those within the system about trauma informed practice in working with sexual violence victim/survivors.

In the USA, it has been noted that sexual offence conviction rates are much higher than average (from 60-80%) within trained specialist units (The White House Council on Women and Girls: 2014).

Recommendation 10

That the concept of trained specialist sexual violence units is researched with a view to implementation.

3.11 Lack of collaboration

Currently in Queensland there is a lack of formal collaboration between victim/survivors, support agencies, forensic medical officers, police and ODPP. Improved cohesion and communication between various participants in the CJS can improve service quality and better support complainants.

In the USA, collaborative initiatives aimed at better supporting victims and increasing arrest and conviction rates are being funded. The Department of Justice has funded multidisciplinary sexual assault teams to support victim/survivors (The White House Council on Women and Girls: 2014).

Recommendation 11

That collaborative multidisciplinary models be explored aimed at improving service quality and support for victim/survivors.

3.12 Secondary trauma and victim dissatisfaction

To increase satisfaction with the process and to reduce secondary victimisation of victim/survivors a range of process and reforms are necessary.

Legal reform in Queensland is needed to ensure counselling notes are considered privileged information and to afford rape complainants protection and privacy in relation to their emotional journey in the aftermath of a sexual crime (See 3.9).

Dedicated specialist workers in the entire court environment need to be trained in the area of sexual violence. Specialist training programs for dedicated prosecutors, dedicated trained court staff, magistrates and judges are important. Education would increase their understanding of the nature and impact of sexual violence and to better understand and make sense of and respond to victim/survivor behaviour.

In the USA, the Office on Violence Against Women is funding specialised sexual assault training for prosecutors (The White House Council on Women and Girls: 2014).

Recommendation 12

That compulsory, ongoing training be provided to dedicated prosecutors, court staff, magistrates and judges on the nature and impact of sexual violence.

3.13 Lack of specialisation or dedicated courts

In Queensland, sexual crimes are dealt with in the criminal justice system without specialist workers or dedicated courts. Inconsistencies and a lack of understanding about sexual assault and its impact on victim/survivors are common. Specialised sex crime units are internationally recognised as good practice.

In some parts of South Africa sexual offences courts have been in existence for a decade having been set up to address the high levels of under reporting, lack of public confidence and to provide a more appropriate service to victims. It was recognised that procedural reforms alone could not result in significant attitudinal change without adequate specialist training for all court officials. Evaluations have shown overall the conviction rates for sexual offences in South Africa increased by over 20%. Furthermore, that it is rare for matters to be withdrawn and generally matters are disposed of within six to nine months (Saunderson: 2005).

In Canada, specialised courts addressing Domestic Violence and sexual offences committed by a spouse or family member were first established in Manitoba to reduce delays, provide a supportive environment for victims, to reduce the attrition rate and to achieve more consistent and appropriate sentencing. Results from this jurisdiction showed that specialisation was seen to increase the quality of the crown case, achieve higher conviction rates and an increase in reporting (Ursel: 2005).

Legal reform in NSW has resulted in dedicated courts with specialist staff, separate entrances for victims and specially trained prosecutors who ideally handle cases from bail to trial. Sexual assault trials are given listing priority over all other cases and are to be listed within four months of the committal date and no later than six months from the date of committal (Wilkins: 2011).

Victoria has taken a case management approach and specialist sex offence list modelled on examples from Canada and South Africa. The Magistrates Court of Victoria states:

“The Sexual Offences List is a specially managed list of all cases relating to a charge for a sexual offence in recognition of the unique features of such cases including the difficulties faced by complainants. A specially managed list will also provide a greater level of consistency in the handling of these cases.”

Since legislative changes came into effect in Victoria in 2006, there has been a significant increase in the number of sexual offences that are both reported and investigated by police and in those that proceed to trial. There has also been less delay with a more timely resolution of matters (Quinn: 2011).

Recommendation 13

That utilising promising practice from other jurisdictions a pilot site for a dedicated court with trained specialist staff and a managed sexual crimes list is developed and evaluated with a view to being rolled out across the state.

3.14 Alternatives to the criminal justice system

Whilst New Zealand has not adopted a specialist court model, some alternative options have been considered. In the area of sexual offences, it is not appropriate to utilise a traditional restorative justice model. However, in New Zealand and also in the USA, there has been some success with project RESTORE a specialised restorative justice practice utilised in certain cases of sexual violence (Julich et al., 2011; Koss, Bachar and Hopkins, 2003).

Recommendation 14

That successful overseas alternatives to the current criminal justice system be investigated with a view to trialling in Queensland.

3.15 Intersection with domestic violence

Although the sexual violence dimension of domestic violence is the least talked about it does occur in a broad range of intimate relationships including married, unmarried, dating, heterosexual, and same-sex relationships.

Twelve per cent of Australian women reported experiencing sexual violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime (Mouzos & Makkai: 2004).

Many women will be unable to disclose sexual violence perpetrated by a partner; however some women disclose acts of sexual violence that have occurred when they are seeking a protection order. Most often criminal action is not taken and only a civil response occurs.

Recommendation 15

That Queensland police undertake training to recognise and respond to sexual violence in intimate relationships and furthermore that both civil and criminal action is taken where sexual violence is disclosed.

3.16 Intersection with elder abuse

Elder sexual abuse includes the coercing of an older person through force, trickery, threats, or other means into unwanted sexual activity and sexual contact with elders who are unable to give informed consent.

Sexual abuse is the least frequently reported and substantiated form of elder abuse. However reports of this crime are increasing with 1488 assaults reported by aged-care providers in 2011. Serious physical assaults made up 80 per cent of complaints, 19 per cent were sexual assaults and 1 per cent were both (Medew: 2011).

With an ageing population, awareness raising of this dimension of elder abuse is important for community members and it is essential that police and prosecutors undertake training in this emerging area.

Recommendation 16

That Queensland police undertake training to recognise and respond to sexual violence in the context of elder abuse.

3.17 Sexual violence prevention

Whilst intervention strategies are being explored there needs to be parallel strategies focussing on the reduction and elimination of sexual violence. These strategies must be consistent and multi-faceted including prevention programs in the schools and communities.

Recommendation 17

That the Queensland government fund sexual violence prevention initiatives consistent with the *National Plan To Reduce Violence Against Women And Their Children* and *National Sexual Assault Prevention Standards*.

3.18 Future consultation

There are many aspects of good practice operating in other jurisdictions that could be adapted to suit the Queensland situation. Effective practices have been identified and it is possible to make changes that better support victims, increase satisfaction and confidence in the process as well as increase convictions.

Post parliamentary inquiry there needs to be a mechanism than can explore, advise and lead positive change for victim/survivors of sexual crimes in Queensland.

Recommendation 18

That a multi-disciplinary working party of stakeholders is formed with representatives drawn from police, ODPP, sexual violence services, forensic medical officers and victim/survivors to review and improve the criminal justice system response to sexual violence.

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