Information and support for people affected by
*The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and *The NSW Special Commission of Inquiry*

With the recent announcement of The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry concerning the investigation of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the Hunter region, people who have been affected by sexual assault or child abuse may find that they have a resurfacing of feelings or memories related to their own experiences. They may even decide to tell someone for the first time about their experiences.

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act or threat to a child or young person under the age of 16 that causes them harm or causes them to be frightened or fearful. Under the law, children under 16 years are not able to give consent or agree to any sexual act or threat.

Publicity surrounding issues such as child sexual assault can trigger memories of past losses or events that happened many years ago and for some victims of abuse can bring back feelings of anger, grief and sadness. Some people may be especially vulnerable, including those who have recently experienced a loss or a significant life change, and those who have experienced other traumas or major crises.

Some victims of abuse may be considering participating in the Royal Commission or Special Commission of Inquiry, or thinking about what the current inquiries may mean for them. There may also be anxiety and worry about the information that is uncovered, or hope and expectations about the outcomes of these inquiries.

**COMMON REACTIONS**

Some common reactions that victims of abuse may notice include:

- prolonged crying and sadness
- fear
- nightmares and difficulty sleeping
- feeling vulnerable or unsafe
- nausea or headaches
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling out of control
- uneasiness
- intrusive thoughts about the event
- a dramatic change in mood
- anger or frustration
- depression or anxiety.

**SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE**

If you are experiencing emotions which have resurfaced from past events, remember that this is normal reaction. Everyone responds to being a victim of abuse differently. There is no right or wrong way to respond. The important thing is to look after yourself and to know that help is available.
What can I do to assist myself?

- Seek support from family and friends - let them know how you are feeling and what you are currently experiencing.
- Don’t be too hard on yourself, expect that you may feel unsettled by hearing/seeing information in the media about abuse related matters.
- Try to get plenty of sleep, gentle exercise and eat healthy regular meals.
- Try to keep to your normal routine.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol, smoking or other drugs.
- Talk to a medical practitioner for professional help and advice.
- If you feel overwhelmed or require additional support – seek counselling.

How can Approved Counselling help me?

Counselling can provide you with support and an opportunity to talk to a trained professional in a confidential environment. Counselling may assist you in finding ways to manage the stress and trauma associated with what you have experienced. Counselling may also assist by connecting you with other support services or referrals to agencies in your local area.

Applying for counselling through Victims Services Approved Counselling Scheme is very straightforward. You can complete and send your application for counselling using the online form or you can phone the Victims Access Line during business hours for more information on accessing counselling.

Where can I go for information and support?

You can call the Victims Access Line at Victims Services for information about how to access counselling and other support. The Referral and Support officers can provide confidential emotional support and crisis counselling, help in identifying your needs, and referrals to other groups and services that may assist you in your recovery.

The Victims Access Line also operates an emergency support service after hours.

Phone....................................................................................................................................................................................................................... 1800 633 063
Victims Services website .......................................................................................................................................... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Where can I find information about sexual assault?

The Helping victims of sexual assault website provides information for victims of sexual assault including how to report a sexual assault matter to the police, the investigation process, the court process, options for support and assistance, information about safety and protection and additional resources.

Helping victims of sexual assault website.................................................................................................................. www.sexualassault.nsw.gov.au

Where can I find information about the Royal Commission or NSW Special Commission Inquiry?

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

National call centre ................................................................................................................................................. 1800 099 340

Special Commission of Inquiry concerning the investigation of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the Hunter Region