

# The Path Forward

Information and Resources  
for adult survivors of child sexual assault



**Acknowledgements:**

In producing this booklet Bravehearts would like to acknowledge the awesome work of the many staff, volunteers and supporters who have contributed to the growth of our organisation over the years.

Bravehearts would also like to dedicate this booklet to all of the adult survivors of child sexual assault, and the supporting families, carers and friends around them.

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This Booklet has been produced by Bravehearts Inc - a therapeutic, support and advocacy service for survivors of child sexual assault. Bravehearts is actively involved in education, prevention, early intervention and research programs relating to child sexual assault.

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Bravehearts Inc, 2008

Bravehearts  
PO Box 575  
Arundel BC  
Qld, 4214

# BRAVE HEARTS



*"Protecting children against sexual assault"*

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## Bravehearts Branch Contacts



### Queensland (Head Office)

☎ 1800 114 474 (free call)  
✉ PO Box 575, Arundel BC, Qld 4215  
✉ admin@bravehearts.org.au

### Queensland (Springwood Counselling Office)

☎ 1800 114 474 (free call)

### New South Wales

☎ 02 8216 6360  
☎ 02 8216 6213  
✉ PO Box R994, Royal Exchange, NSW 1225  
✉ Bravehearts\_nsw@yahoo.com.au

### Western Australia

☎ 08 9757 9999  
✉ PO Box 1829, Margaret River, WA 6285  
✉ westaustbravehearts@westnet.com.au

Also check out our websites:

[www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)

[www.ditto.com.au](http://www.ditto.com.au)

[www.whiteballoon.com.au](http://www.whiteballoon.com.au)

[www.myspace.com/braveheartsaustralia](http://www.myspace.com/braveheartsaustralia)

## Who is Bravehearts?

Hetty Johnston founded Bravehearts Inc with the inaugural *White Balloon Day* in Child Protection Week in September 1997. *White Balloon Day* was created in response to the revelation that a family member was a paedophile. A brave disclosure by a 7 year old led to the realisation that this much loved family elder had preyed on innocent children and their trusting parents for over 40 years. Compounding this tragedy was the fact that this 40 year reign of terror had never been disclosed, let alone reported.



Bravehearts Inc. has evolved into an organisation whose purpose is to provide therapeutic, support and advocacy services to survivors of child sexual assault. We are also actively involved in education, prevention, early intervention and research programs relating to child sexual assault.

Bravehearts *protects children against sexual assault* and is forging a movement for change in how child sexual assault is dealt with by the criminal justice sector, government, institutions, churches and the community at large.

As well as supporting survivors of child sexual assault, Bravehearts is uniquely positioned to deal with the effects of this crime because:

- We deal exclusively with the issue of childhood sexual assault in Australia;
- We provide services for children affected by sexual assault as well as their non-offending siblings, parents and caregivers;
- We are focused on prevention and early intervention as well as healing and activism; and
- We have no religious affiliation and take no position on age, gender, sexuality, culture or economic status.

Because we specialise in the provision of therapeutic and support services to all survivors of child sexual assault, our staff are experienced and have knowledge of the unique context and effects of this form of abuse/assault. Our holistic approach allows us to provide for the wide range of survivors' needs.

**No Excuses for Child Sexual Assault**  
**Never Ever**

Bravehearts is continually expanding the programs we offer. The many programs we offer include:

**Counselling Services:** We provide counselling and support to children and adolescents who have experienced, or are at risk of, child sexual assault. The program also provides support services for client's non-offending family members.



**Advocacy and Support:** This program provides specialised and accurate advice and assists survivors, families and community members in the resolution of their concerns through appropriate channels.

**Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure - CD-Rom:** The first of its kind in addressing the issue of protective behaviours for children and young people, DKSA has become an invaluable tool in teaching children and young people about personal safety. (See page 25)

**Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure - Education Program:** A fun, live, interactive personal safety education program based on DKSA CD-Rom, sees Ditto travelling to schools and child care centres.

**Respect MySpace:** Our partnership with MySpace aims to provide information to those young people, utilising MySpace, who are at risk of sexual assault and enabling them to access help and support.

**Adult Education:** These programs provide training and awareness workshops on risk management for staff and volunteers in organisations that have contact with children. The workshops are also available to other interested parties such as parent groups.

**White Balloon Awareness Campaign:** Held annually since 1997, the campaign was labelled a 'phenomenon' by Senior Police when the 1999 campaign resulted in a staggering 514% increase in disclosures.

**Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme:** SADS was developed with the assistance of an interagency working party. It encourages survivors to disclose and as such stands to protect thousands of children from known predators.

**Loud & Clear:** Produced in conjunction with Qld Police & the Qld Law Society, this free educative booklet provides adult survivors with vital information about the process of the criminal justice system.

**Crisis Information Pack:** This publication was produced to provide information to parents and family members where there are concerns about child sexual assault. It also includes information for adult survivors and an extensive list of contacts.

**Research and Lobbying Program:** We are actively involved in research, policy development and lobbying that aims to prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce the incidence of child sexual assault in our communities.

**For more information on our programs and products,  
please visit our websites listed on Page 1**

## Facts and stats about child sexual assault

### What is child sexual assault?

Child sexual assault is any form of sexual behaviour that involves and/or is imposed upon a child.



### Prevalence

- It is estimated that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys are victims of sexual assault.
- Girls and boys of all ages are sexually assaulted and victims are sometimes toddlers, young children and even babies.
- Child sexual assault spans all races, economic classes and ethnic groups.
- It is estimated that more than 150,000 children under the age of 17 years in Queensland have been sexually assaulted and an estimated 420,000 Queenslanders over the age of 18 are survivors of sexual assault.
- In 2000-01 the Queensland Police recorded 2,635 sexual offences against victims aged 0-19 years. They involved 208 children aged 0-4, 541 aged 5-9, 1,000 aged 10-14, and 886 aged 15-19.

### The Offenders

- One in three child sexual offenders are adolescents.
- Around 80 per cent of the time, the offender is known to the child.
- Only about 17% of reported sexual offences result in a conviction, a figure consistent with data from other States and overseas.
- Females do sexually assault in a small proportion of cases, approximately 5% of female victims and 20% of male victims experience sexual assault perpetrated by a female.

For more statistics check out our Facts and Stats paper:  
<http://www.bravehearts.org.au/positionstatement.ews>

### **The Effects**

- Some 70% of psychiatric patients are known to have been sexually assaulted as children.
- 80 to 85% of women in Australian prisons have been victims of incest or other forms of abuse.
- 70% of all prisoners were abused as children.
- Effects may include extreme distrust of others, self-blame, stigma, self-hatred and self-harming behaviours such as substance abuse, eating disorders, suicide and a subconscious attraction to and re-victimisation by abusive partners.

### **The Economic Costs**

- A recent Australian study funded by a Criminology Research Council Grant, conservatively estimates the (tangibles) cost to society of child sexual assault to be in excess of \$180,000 per child.
- At a national level, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence conservatively estimates 40,000 Australian children will be sexually assaulted each year. That equates to \$7.2 billion dollars annually.

### **Disclosing**

- 169 child sex offenders who admitted having committed at least one sexual offence against a child later disclosed offences concerning 1,010 children.
- One in five parents, who were aware that their child had been sexually assaulted, did not report the sexual assault.
- Project Axis sought information from 66 non-government schools about their policies for dealing with suspected child sexual assault - only six had a specific policy in place. Of the 51 community groups contacted only three had established any policy for handling suspicions or disclosures of child sexual assault.

## Common Fears for Adult Survivors

**If you are an adult who remembers being sexually assaulted, you may feel...**

- Afraid that you've made it up.
- Angry at the person for what they have done to you.
- Betrayed by the person who assaulted you and the people who did not protect you.
- Scared to tell anyone.
- Anxious and panicked.
- Sad about the loss of your childhood.
- Guilty because you think you must have done something to make it happen.
- Tricked because the assault was called "love".
- Angry and/or depressed because no-one protected you.
- Isolated because you couldn't tell anybody.
- Confused because you liked the special interest that was taken in you.
- Ashamed and confused about your body's reactions.
- Worried about what other people will think.
- Confused about what really happened.



Many of these fears are the same as the feelings you may have felt as a child. These concerns can stop us from speaking out.

It is important for you to know it is okay to have these feelings and it is okay to talk about them.

## How Child Sexual Assault May Impact on You

It is important to understand that the trauma of child sexual assault can affect you in many ways. The pain may not end even if the sexual assault has.

There are many ways child sexual assault **may** affect you:

You may:

- \* Hate your body
- \* Have difficulty trusting people
- \* Find intimacy in relationships very difficult
- \* Feel that sex is disgusting or humiliating
- \* Often 'space out' and not be in the present
- \* Be affected physically
- \* Sometimes feel 'crazy' without reason
- \* Force yourself to be busy and 'on the move' all the time
- \* Feel angry at someone or angry at everyone
- \* Have concerns about your sexuality
- \* Have flashbacks with certain triggers
- \* Have a serious lack of self-confidence
- \* Be affected in how you interact with your own children



**REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE  
ALREADY LIVED THROUGH THE HARDEST  
AND MOST PAINFUL PART —  
THE ASSAULT ITSELF.**

## Shame and Guilt

**Guilt** is an emotion and concept that belongs to the abuser, who was in control of the sexual assault you suffered, and who was the one who started the sexual assault. **Shame** is the emotion that survivors take on. The abuser should feel this, but often does not, because they don't see that they have done anything wrong! In fact, they often go to great lengths to ensure survivors take on the shame, as that absolves them of the shame and guilt they should have and keeps survivors from speaking out.

The thing to remember is that no matter what happened to you, it was the abuser who made plans to sexually assault you, and in doing so, had all the advantages, you had none.

It is not fair for you to feel that you "should" have been able to do something to stop it. The abuser made sure you couldn't. The assault happened because the abuser planned it carefully, and was never, ever fair. It's not because you were weak, or cowardly, or stupid.

The powerlessness, fear, and shock of the sexual assault is behind your feeling of shame. You need to realise that the abuser worked very hard to ensure that they had all the power, and you had none. Abusers will use the element of surprise. Abusers use the age difference, especially when adults sexual assault children.

Remember that the shame has been implanted in you by the abuser. There are two reasons for this: first, that is how they got their pleasure; by making you feel ashamed. Second, that is how they hoped to keep you from reporting the act to someone.

No matter what the abuser said to you, it was wrong. Nothing that was said was true; everything they said was a lie to serve their own end. It made them feel good and it made them feel safe.

If the sexual assault is ongoing, or if it happened thirty years ago, the emotional wounds are still very real. It is never too late to start working on emotional healing.

If you recognise the difference between guilt and shame, and then isolate each of them, you can work with them as separate issues and stop confusing them, and overcome them too!

Shame becomes an integral negative issue left behind in a survivor's struggle for recovery, and sadly has the desired effect that abusers expect, namely to impose silence upon those they sexually assault.

Even if you spoke out against your abuser, if the shame of having been sexually assaulted remains with you it can hinder any form of recovery.

So lets look at the issue of shame, what it does to you, and how it can affect you in daily life, and those around you.

As a child or adult who has been sexually assaulted, the shame associated with sexual assault can ingrain itself into every aspect of your thoughts, actions and in-actions in life.

For whatever reason, you may feel ashamed for what happened to you, and blame yourself for having been sexually assaulted:

- \* You may see the sexual assault as your fault, in some way, perhaps because you 'failed' to speak out, or perhaps you may have enjoyed some aspects of the sexual assault, the warmth, hugs or closeness that was missing in other areas of your life.
- \* You may see the sexual assault as a sign you were to blame, perhaps "giving off signals".
- \* You may see the sexual assault as a reason for living a life that resembles a life not worth living and allow the sexual assault to live your life instead of you living the life you want and deserve.
- \* You may see the sexual assault as something you will be never be able to overcome, and as such, don't even bother to see if it is possible, which it is.
- \* You may see the sexual assault as a way to remain locked up in your world, isolated from all around you, never letting people in, to know the real you, and to love you, as you feel unlovable, unloved, and dirty.
- \* You may see the fact that the abuser hurt you, if anyone enters your world again you run the risk of being hurt again, so best to avoid being hurt again.



All of the above are negative in the effects they have upon you, and all prevent any chance of change occurring, though this may seem preferable, it is no way to live, nor exist.

## Anger, Fear and Confusion

Survivors of child sexual assault can also feel anger, fear and confusion over what happened to them. It is important to allow yourself to feel these emotions and to explore and direct them in positive ways. Some of the ways these feelings may manifest include:

### Anger

- \* At the abuser
- \* At other adults for not protecting you
- \* At other adults for not understanding
- \* At yourself
- \* At being betrayed by someone you trusted
- \* At losing a part of yourself

### Fear

- \* Of the abuser
- \* Of never feeling 'normal'
- \* Of causing trouble
- \* Of hurting people around you
- \* Of being different
- \* Of your losing control

### Confusion

- \* Because your feelings change all the time
- \* Because you still love the person who sexually assaulted you
- \* Because of your body's reaction
- \* Because you don't know how you are supposed to act
- \* Because you don't know who you are
- \* Because you don't know who to trust
- \* Because it makes you question the impact on your sexuality

## Taking the Path Forward

Letting go of the pain caused by sexual assault is difficult, painful and extremely hard to do, but it is not impossible!



No matter what happened when you were sexually assaulted, you survived, by whatever means, and you can overcome this trauma. Nothing is impossible, not if you want it that much.

It involves you trusting someone, and telling the secrets you have hidden away for so long.

As you begin to tell, allow yourself to get in touch with all of the feelings, fears and emotions that arise.

Don't be afraid to show the real you who has been hidden for so long.

Don't be afraid of the emotions either; don't be ashamed or afraid to be angry, sad, mad, or tearful.

You have the right to show those emotions, just like everyone else.

You don't have to be strong all of the time.

It doesn't matter where you start, the beginning, middle or end is a good place to start, you can add to it as you talk.

### Some of these ideas might help:

- It can sometimes help to tell another person, someone who is respectful and honours who you are.
- It may be a relief to accept that the assault really happened and that it has caused you great pain.
- Believe that it was not your fault, this lets you put the blame where the blame belongs, with the person who assaulted you.
- Learn to trust your memories, feelings and dreams.
- Ease the pain by crying and feeling the sadness.
- Express the anger towards the person who assaulted you in a safe and appropriate way.
- Feel compassion for yourself and the child who was frightened and powerless.
- See a counsellor or join a support group.
- Use your experience to assist others.

To tell someone, perhaps a friend or partner, that you have been sexually assaulted as a child is extremely difficult.

The fear you will be disbelieved or thought to have taken part in it willingly, is soul destroying and can prevent you from talking about it.

Listed below are some requirements that have to be honoured by you and the person you speak to:

1. Being listened to, and believed, even the unbelievable.
2. Remembering the sexual assault in your time, not being rushed to recall everything.
3. Understanding and accepting that you were not to blame.
4. Letting go of the pain.
5. Expressing repressed emotions, e.g. pain, fear, anger, sadness, guilt, etc.
6. Identifying/reclaiming who you are.
7. Increasing self-respect/esteem.
8. Taking control of your life.
9. Stopping self-inflicted pain, e.g. alcohol/drug misuse, crime, self-harming, etc.
10. Looking at past relationships, forming new relationships.

Dealing with all of the above takes incredible courage, nerve, and determination to overcome the sexual assault, which in many cases has been buried or hidden for many years.

The journey you undertake is very empowering, healing, and will allow you to face up to what happened to you, acknowledge the sexual assault, but more importantly refuse to allow it live your life any more.

## **What Can I Do Now?**

If you want the person who assaulted you to be held accountable for what they have done to you or if you are concerned that they are continuing to offend, then you need to report the sexual assault to the police.

You can phone -

- 1) The Police - Your local police station and ask to speak to a detective. It is probably better if you speak to the police by telephone first - look under **Police Stations** in your White Pages
- 2) Crime Stoppers - 1800 333 000 (Freecall, 24 hours per day). Calls to Crime Stoppers can be completely anonymous.
- 3) Bravehearts' Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme (SADS) - 1800 114 474 (during business hours). SADS, an anonymous and official method of disclosure, is outlined on page 17.

If you do choose to go directly to a police station you should indicate to the officer at the front counter that you wish to speak to someone in private because the matter is very personal. A detective may not be available at the time to speak to you and a uniformed officer may take some details from you and then arrange for someone to contact you. If someone is available to speak to you straight away the interview may take a while, so make sure you go at a time when you do not have to rush off. When you go to the police station, you can take someone with you as a 'support person' if this makes you feel more comfortable.

### ***Can I claim compensation for what I have suffered?***

It is recommended that you seek legal advice if you are considering applying for compensation, especially as time limits apply. If the offender is convicted, then you must apply for compensation within three years from the date the offender is sentenced in court. If you were under 18 years of age at the time of the sentence you have three years from when you turn 18.

If the offender is not convicted then an *ex gratia* application may be made to the government. You must apply within three years of the offence or within three years of you turning 18 if you were a child at the time of the offence. An extension of time may be granted in some circumstances.

Strict time limits also apply in personal injury matters.

You can obtain advice from your own private solicitor or contact Legal Aid (see numbers on pages 15-16).

**See our "Loud and Clear" publication for more information**

## Counselling & Support Services

While we can not list all the counselling and support services across the country, we have listed some in each State and Territory. If you need a referral to somewhere in your area, these services will know what is available.

If you have any problems locating a service near you, please feel free to contact **Bravehearts** on **1800 114 474** or **admin@bravehearts.org.au**

### Australian Capital Territory

Annodora (Incest Survivors) .....02 6249 6070  
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre .....02 6247 2525  
Legal Aid.....1300 654 314

### New South Wales

Bravehearts Inc.....02 8216 6360  
Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse.....02 8920 3611  
Centacare (Statewide).....02 9660 2044  
Dympna House.....1800 654 119  
Lismore Child/Adolescent Sexual Assault Service ....02 6621 9861  
Legal Aid.....1300 888 529

### Northern Territory

Ruby Gaea House .....08 8945 0155  
Sexual Assault Referral Centre .....08 8951 5884  
Legal Aid.....1800 019 343

### Queensland

Bravehearts Inc.....1800 114 474  
Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre..07 3391 0004  
Centre Against Sexual Violence.....07 3808 3299  
Protect All Children Today .....07 3290 0111  
Phoenix House.....07 4153 4299  
Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline.....1800 010 120  
Legal Aid.....1300 65 11 88

**South Australia**

Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse.....08 8388 5661  
Sexual Assault Service .....08 8226 8777  
Yarrow Place .....1800 817 421  
Legal Aid.....1300 366 424

**Tasmania**

Sexual Assault Support Service (Hobart).....03 6231 1811  
Laurel House (Launceston) .....03 6334 2740  
Sexual Assault Support Service (Nth West).....03 6431 9711  
Legal Aid.....1300 366 611

**Victoria**

Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse.....03 9880 7070  
Centre Against Sexual Assault .....1800 806 292  
Mallee Sexual Assault Service .....03 5025 5400  
Victims Assistance and Referral Services .....1800 819 817  
Legal Aid.....1800 677 402

**Western Australia**

Bravehearts Inc.....08 9757 9999  
Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse.....08 9355 5368  
Incest Survivors Association .....08 9227 8745  
Sexual Assault Resource Centre.....08 9340 1899  
Legal Aid.....1300 650 579

**National Help Lines**

Family Law Hotline .....1800 352 000  
Kids Help Line .....1800 55 1800  
Lifeline .....13 11 14  
Men's Line .....1300 78 99 78  
Violence Against Women—Australia Says No.....1800 200 526

**Remember:  
Child Abuse Ignored  
is Child Abuse**

## Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme

**Bravehearts** recognises that many survivors need the belief and/or validation of others for the strength to disclose and to heal. Bravehearts also recognises that public education and offender identifications are our best weapons against the continuing sexual assault of children.

The idea is that survivors participate in the hope that other victims of the same alleged perpetrator will do likewise or that this notification will add weight to the value of other existing complaints. The potential for verification and validation almost certainly delivers strength for the survivors and provides the encouragement essential for the lodging of an official complaint under standard formal police procedures. Disclosure by survivors also provides a very personal and powerful healing tool on their road to recovery.

**However, the choice must always remain with the participant.**

The SADS involves two forms carrying a unique 'link ID No.' (eg. A1234)

**The first form** contains questions requiring basic contact details of the participant and also requests the provision of a completed 'Declaration' as validation of the identity of the participant.

This form is completed and returned by post to SADS. This information will remain protected by SADS-Bravehearts Inc.

**IT INCLUDES NO INFORMATION ABOUT THE ALLEGED OFFENDER.**

**The second form** contains questions about the alleged offender and calls for basic details of the alleged offences. The format is in accordance with police intelligence requirements. This form is completed and sent (by post) directly to the Police.

**IT INCLUDES NO INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVIVOR.**

**If you would like to participate in the Scheme, please fill out Form A on the following page and we will send you Form B. Alternatively, if you would like more information, contact us on 1800 114 474 or [admin@bravehearts.org.au](mailto:admin@bravehearts.org.au)**

SADS No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Form A - Membership Application**  
Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme (SADS)

**IMPORTANT**  
All information on this form will remain the  
exclusive property of Bravehearts Inc.

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS**

Post this form (**Form A**) together with your proof of name and address to:  
Bravehearts Inc  
PO Box 575  
Arundel BC, Qld 4214

**Form B 'Alleged Offender Details' will be sent to you and must be posted to the Police. To ensure serious consideration of this disclosure, it is important that both forms be completed and returned to the correct addresses.**

Date: \_/ \_/ \_-

Was this offence committed against you or someone else (eg. your child)?  
(Please Circle) **YOU** or **SOMEONE ELSE** Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone:

Ah: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Bus: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality/Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

**This notification may not be treated with the same degree of authenticity failing the completion and return of both forms A & B, plus the 'Proof of Identity' to the appropriate addresses.**

Your vital involvement helps us to provide this invaluable service aimed at protecting innocent children, validating survivors and identifying offenders.



**Become a Braveheart**

**If you believe that child sexual assault must stop, then here is your opportunity to do something about it. By becoming a member of Bravehearts, you will be helping us continue to make a difference in child protection.**

Your money will be spent on protecting children. Not one cent will be wasted. This is our promise to you and to the children of Australia. At no time will any more than 10% of monies raised be swallowed up by administrative costs.

Bravehearts Inc. does important work to prevent the sexual assault of children and to aid in the recovery of children who have already fallen victim.

Government funding only pays for a portion of our work. We need to raise the additional funds necessary to achieve our goals, including: research and legislative reform, education and community awareness. In addition, we aim to expand our services across the nation and internationally.

Bravehearts Inc. is determined to maintain our independence, where we can speak openly, honestly and forthrightly without fear, favour or compromise in defence of children - every time, without fail, no excuses - never ever.

**All members will receive our quarterly newsletter, as well as invitations to all our events.**

**B** means to be **B**rave

**R** is to **R**egain confidence

**A** to **A**chieve our aim

**V** to feel **V**alued at all times

**E** to be **E**ncouraged

**H** the **H**eart, centre of emotions

**E** for **E**thics, morals and values

**A** to **A**spire to do, to be

**R** to be **R**ight and just

**T** to **T**ranscend, to rise above

**S** **S**incere, no deceit