



# Males Sexually Abused in Childhood: A Crime No-One Wanted to Talk About

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“How do you describe in words, what cannot be described in words.” Mal.

# Males Sexually Abused in Childhood: A Crime No-One Wanted to Talk About

## Overview

- Acknowledgement
- Prevalence & Characteristics.
- Common Effects
- Limited Disclosure
- Accessing Support and Making a Statement
- Hope

Questions are welcomed?

## Some Statistics



Between 1 in 3 & 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 & 1 in 10 males are sexually abused whilst under the age of 16 years (Dunne, Purdie et al., 2003; Dube, Anda et al., 2005);

Females report prevalence rates of 4%–12% for penetrative abuse and 14%–36% for non-penetrative abuse

Males report prevalence rates of 1%–8% percent for penetrative abuse, and 6%–16% for non-penetrative abuse (Price-Robertson, 2012).

80% of childhood sexual abuse of males perpetrated by males (Dube, Anda et al., 2005);

Males are more likely than females to be subjected to institutional and clergy abuse as children and prison based sexual violence as adults (Heilpern, 1998; Mariner, 2001; John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004; Parkinson, Oates et al., 2009);

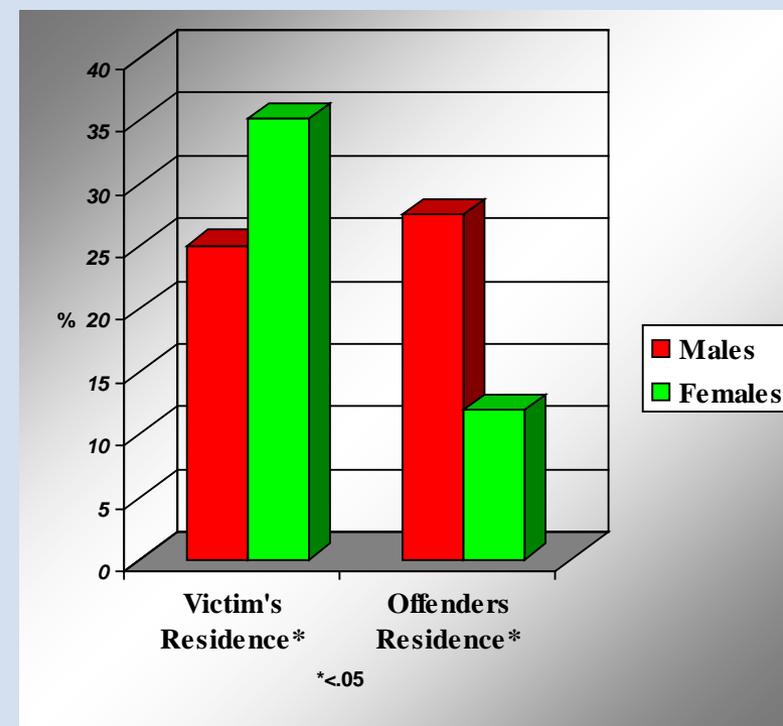
# Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

- 64% of survivors attending private sessions are male
- Males more likely to be abused in places of worship, out of home care, social support services, juvenile justice and detention, education, recreation, sports and clubs, armed forces and youth employment. (Catholic Church 78%, Anglican Church 75% victims male)
- Females more likely to be abused in childcare and health settings
- Proportion of male and female vary over time: Before 1990 65% male, 35% female - Post 1990 56% male 44% female
- Age at time of victimisation 5% Under 5, 28% 5-9yrs, 46% 10-14yrs, 10% 15-17yrs.
- 80% multiple episodes of sexual abuse, 78% in one institution, 16% in two institutions, 6% in three or more.
- 64% by single perpetrator, 36% multiple.

As of August 2017, there have been over **7,213** Private Sessions held **2,252** Referrals to authorities (including police).

Research indicates that while there is no prototypical circumstances that boys find themselves in when abused, compared to girls boys are more likely to be:

- abused outside the home (O'Leary, 2009)
- subjected to extra familial abuse
- abused by a stranger
- abused around witnesses
- abused by a female' (Crome 2006:5; Personal Safety Survey 2005.)



Some boys and men are more often targets of sexual abuse or sexual assault. Risk of sexual abuse escalates if a boy:

- has a learning or physical disability,
- is subjected to other forms of maltreatment in the home,
- placed in state/ institutional care
- is indigenous,
- is same sex attracted.



# Common Effects

## Common Effects

- Distrust, sense of betrayal
- Guilt, Shame, Self blame
- Depression/anxiety - hypervigilance
- Overwhelming emotions, disassociation/numbing, hyper and hypo arousal
- Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms: intrusive re-experiencing, effortful avoidance of distressing stimuli, alterations in cognitions and mood, arousal and reactivity
- Flashbacks/nightmares
- Eating/Body Image Issues (Body Dysmorphia), Weight loss/gain
- Suicidal ideation/self harm
- Relationship difficulties/disorganised attachment
- Sexual difficulties
- Sleep difficulties, insomnia
- Mental health problems/Clinical diagnosis
- Substance abuse, addiction
- Physical Health Difficulties
- Increased risk of re-victimization and offending. (Banyard et al 2004. Tewkesburg, R. (2007) Royal Commission, 2016).



## Relationship Difficulties

- Men and women subjected to sexual abuse are 40-50% more likely to report relationship difficulties. Including difficulties with trust, intimacy,  
**SEX** Dube, Anda et al., 2005;
- Relationship and parenting problems, work stressors, traumatic events, can trigger childhood trauma.
- Difficulties include fear of abandonment, hypersensitivity to criticism, challenges with trust and intimacy and problems dealing with conflict  
Bateman, Henderson and Kezelman 2013:20
- Men subjected to sexual abuse report limited support from friends, family and services. Note – men typically have smaller social support networks than women and are less likely to have a close confident other than a **SPOUSE**. Flood, 2005. Breckenridge, Cunningham et al., 2008, Washington 1997.
- Support for partners is a priority, Partner's distress and isolation is often amplified by the pressure men feel to keep the secret.

# Suicidality

Factors influencing increased suicidal thoughts/actions following experiences of sexual violence are:

- Feeling isolated and alone
- Acting violently and aggressively
- Blaming themselves for the abuse
- Feeling fearful and anxious
- Using alcohol and drugs O'Leary & Gould (2009)
- Loss of hope Spokas et al 2009
- Investment in masculine norms O'Leary & Easton 2014

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## Sex abuse led to 26 suicides says policeman

Nick McKenzie and Richard Baker  
July 30, 2011

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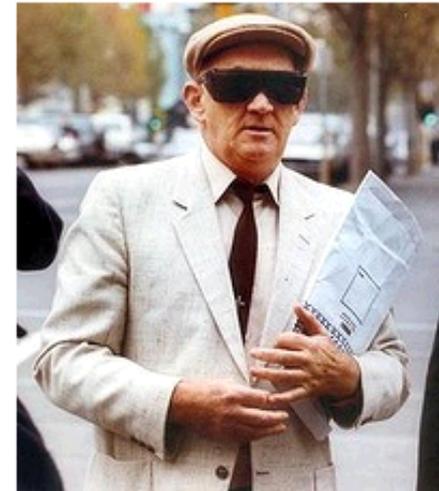
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AS MANY as 26 Victorians have committed suicide after being abused by two notorious paedophile clergymen, according to information gathered by a senior Victorian detective.

In interviews with a university researcher, Detective Sergeant Kevin Carson of the Ballarat Crimes Investigation Unit has revealed that during his investigations into Father Gerald Ridsdale and Christian Brother Robert Best - which led to both being convicted - he discovered that up to 24 young men had killed themselves in the years after they were abused by one or both of the men.

Detective Carson has recently learned of two more suicides, bringing his count to 26.



Father Gerald Ridsdale. Photo: Geoff Ampt

# Unproductive coping strategies adopted by men (O'Leary, 2008)

- Suppression,
- Withdrawal,
- Denial,
- Internalisation,
- Anger,
- Acceptance that this is my lot in life'.

# Productive coping

- Accessing supportive, relevant, targeted information that assists in reducing sense of isolation and self-blame.
- Practical assistance. Working to develop concrete life skills that address the impact of sexual abuse, learning to tolerate emotional distress. O'Leary & Gould, 2010
- Talking with someone who is supportive, worker, partner, friend. O'Leary & Gould, 2010.
- Talking with someone who encountered a similar event. Well being enhanced through supporting and helping others O'Leary & Gould 2010; Grossman, Sorsoli et al, 2006; Kia-Keating, Sorsoli et al., 2010.
- Developing sense of hope, positive re-interpretation and growth. Practicing self compassion and optimism. O'Leary and Gould, 2010; (Grossman, Cook, Kepkep, & Koenen, 1999; Wolin and Wolin, 1993;

Research on Post Traumatic Growth identifies that post a traumatic event growth can occur leading to a greater appreciation and valuing of life, closer, more intimate relationships, increased personal resilience and sense of strength, re-evaluation of life priorities and possibilities.





# Disclosure

# Is telling a good thing?

- Intuitively YES - But then what happens?
- Historically most disclosures at the time are not responded to appropriately or adequately (Easton 2013, O'Leary, Coohy & Easton 2010)
- That is why research indicates that disclosure can be predictive of a severer outcome (Easton 2013 and O'Leary, 2009)
- Responses to disclosure can enhance or hinder recovery depending on the level of survivor validation and attribution of blame to the perpetrator (Anderson & Hiersteiner, 2008; Chouliara, et al., 2014).
- Delayed disclosure is not only about barriers, but also part of exercising judgment about safety to tell.

## Limited disclosure

Boys are less likely to disclose at the time sexual abuse occurs than girls

(Paine and Hansen, 2002; O'Leary and Barber, 2008, Okur van der Knapap & Bogaerts 2017).



Men typically disclose being sexually abused in childhood 10 years later than women – on average 22 years after the assault (O'Leary and Barber, 2008; O'Leary and Gould, 2009).

Men report first in depth discussion, 28 years after the sexual abuse and first helpful in depth discussion, 30 years after the abuse. (Easton 2012)

Men are more likely than women to make a selective disclosure. (Hunter, 2011)

# Barriers to disclosure

Confusion, guilt, fear, shame, embarrassment. Mistrust of others, Identifying the experience as sexual abuse.

Restrictive ideas of manhood. Fear of losing control and becoming overwhelmed by emotions (sense of shame).

Questioning of his sexuality. Fear of being labelled gay or that he might be gay.

Suggestions he might become a perpetrator

Lack of identified support, services, community awareness

**If I tell you I was sexually abused, will you...**

...judge me?

...believe me?

...see me as less of a man?

...add to my sense of shame?

...question my sexuality?

...think I will abuse?

...listen?

# Disclosure and Risk

Adult disclosure of past child sexual abuse is a critical time for men (Easton, 2014).

In the time immediately following a disclosure men's risk to suicidal ideation can increase (O'Leary & Gould, 2009; O'Leary, 1998).

It can also result in a positive turning point in seeking assistance and support (Easton, 2014; O'Leary, 2008).

The decision to disclose is not a 'one off' dilemma, is an ongoing questions throughout the life course. Each time might prompt a trigger for further trauma or distress, but also might be an opportunity for validation and to build growth. (Tener and Murphy, 2015, p. 392):

# Addressing child sexual abuse is about creating a safe, supportive community response.

“I think the bigger fault was that nobody would talk about it, nobody would mention it.. I've sometimes said that if we'd been gossips, which we weren't, and we'd said to one another about the problems that were there, we would have realised earlier just how widespread this awful business was.” Cardinal Pell Evidence 27 May 2013.

Royal Commission has recommended mandatory reporting and removal of protection of the Confessional.

- Archbishop Hart “I’d rather go to prison than report child abuse to Police”
- Archbishop of Brisbane, Mark Coleridge said he would “conscientiously refuse to comply with the law’
- Father Brennan suggested requiring clerics to report abuse allegations would make children less safe because it ‘may take away the one possibility that a sex offender will repent and turn himself in” 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017.

Crime of Sodomy - Inter Christianos Non Nominandum - Amongst Christians Never to Be Named. An Act Contra Naturam Previously recorded in Qld Statute as an Unnatural Offence.

# 'Trauma Informed Care and Practice'

Emphasises the importance of:

- Creating a safe supportive environment
- Prioritising individual choice and self determination
- Developing understanding and awareness of impacts and triggers
- Enhancing individual resources and support to better manage impacts
- Foregrounding a recovery oriented, empowering, strengths based approach
- Developing trusting, collaborative, respectful relationships

# Trauma Informed Therapeutic Framework

## Three Phase (Herman 2004; Curtois & Ford 2008, Curtois & Ford 2012).

- Phase 1: Safety, Stabilisation & Engagement
- Phase 2: Processing of trauma – Meaning making for self
- Phase 3: Developing sense of self, personal and relational integrity. Integration – reintegration.



“I don't think that it all has fully sunk in yet, that this struggle for truth, justice and validation, that I started five years ago is actually coming to a favourable ending, for me.

It seems to me that a small measure of justice IS possible for a survivor of abuse, but it takes an awful lot of struggle, pain and motivation to create that small measure.

**Has it been worth it? ABSOLUTELY!!!!!! I feel great!**

I am so grateful and overwhelmed for all the support I have received from my family, the police, the prosecutors, the court and my online friends and supporters.

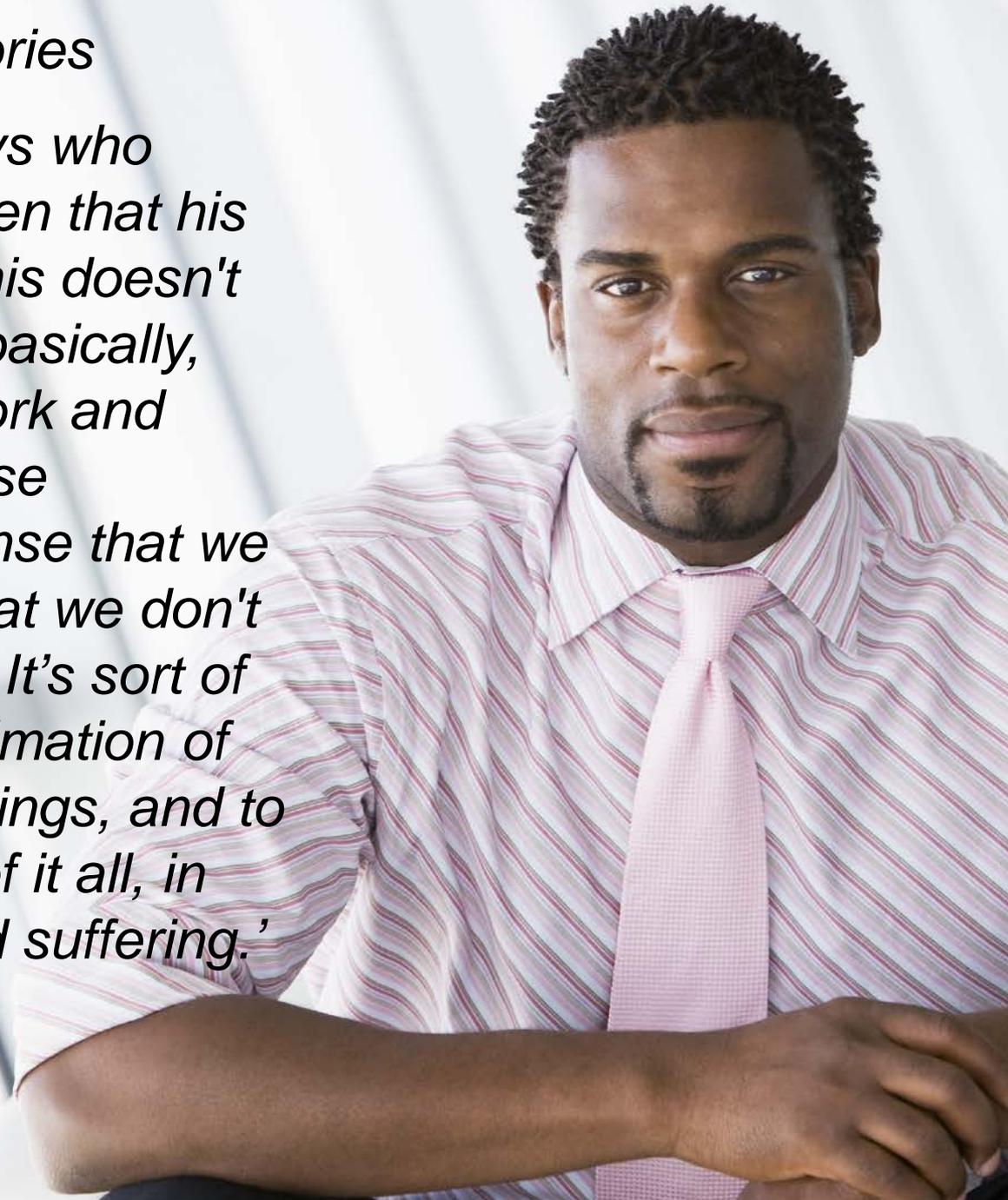
**Believe me, it ALL helped me get through!”**

## **Mapping out the process**

- Engage the person and take time to explain the process and purpose of interviewing.
- Understand current life circumstances and context of reporting.
- Emphasis on ensuring witness has information and support throughout the process of reporting and court if goes to trial.
- Life circumstances and context at time alleged sexual abuse occurred.
- Free narrative, what occurred, where, when, who, how.
- Attempts and barriers to disclosure in the past and present
- Follow up, process from here, link in support and assistance.

## *Sharing Inspirational Stories*

*'The media image of guys who have been abused is often that his whole life is wrecked. This doesn't give us hope. Because basically, we need inspirational work and stories to be told, because otherwise we get the sense that we can't deal with things, that we don't have it within ourselves. It's sort of like a constant underestimation of our ability to deal with things, and to find peace in the midst of it all, in the midst of the pain and suffering.'*





Comments and questions are welcomed.

Thank you - Gary and Patrick

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## Basics

- Design, develop and market services specifically to men in all their diversity.
- Emphasis on distributing, engaging, practical information & resources, address barriers/difficulties (web and hard copy).
- Offer counselling and support—face-to-face, telephone, online, group programs - for men, supporterspartners.
- Skilled intake/counsellors to engage at initial contact.
- Minimal waiting times for consultations and flexible appointments (evening).
- Ensure male-friendly entrance, waiting area, counselling rooms.
- Provide, support access to associated, relevant services. Develop genuine service partnerships that support warm referrals and avoid unnecessary repetition of information.
- Offer choice of female or male counsellor/advocate.