

# Newsletter

October is Sexual Violence Awareness Month. During this month we engage in education and dialogue aimed at addressing the widespread issue of sexual violence.

The latest data from Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS, 2022) found that 51% of women aged 24 to 30 had experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, which shows a significant increase from previous estimates. Figures like these, highlight how pervasive this issue is and how hidden it has been. Each day, more survivors find their voices and we are only now beginning to understand the true extent of sexual violence in our community.

During the month of October, we are focusing on Sexual Violence Awareness through the theme of **Help, Hope, Change**. This provides an opportunity to learn more about how we can help survivors, what hope looks, sounds, and feels like after trauma, and importantly how we can all contribute to change that supports survivors and holds perpetrators to account. Social change takes time, however by focusing on pieces of the puzzle we can immediately create change on an individual and interpersonal level and develop the skills and strategies to sustain our advocacy.

A great place to begin is to Start By Believing.

This simple change offers help and hope, and makes a huge difference to a person's healing journey. Did you know:

- Most people first disclose an experience of sexual violence to someone they trust like a friend or family member.
- If they are believed by their informal supporters they are more likely to seek out formal supports like counselling or police reporting.
- A negative response to a disclosure is worse than no response at all.

We can all make an impact. During October, we are reminded that sexual violence is real not rare, and along with hope and healing - change is possible!

