

25 May 2015

### **Reclaim Support Services: supporting survivors of child sexual abuse**

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is holding a public hearing in Ballarat from Tuesday 19 May, with a second public hearing to commence on a date to be announced.

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is supporting Victorian survivors of child sexual abuse in organisational settings who take part in or are affected by the Royal Commission.

Under the banner *Reclaim Support Services*, RAV is providing counselling, information, advice and support free of charge to survivors of child sexual abuse, their families and employees of institutions or organisations where abuse took place.

Reclaim Clinical Coordinator, Julia Douglas, said the Royal Commission provides survivors with the opportunity to be heard, through a process that is independent and free of stigma.

“It’s important for people to have the chance tell their story, with hearings now taking place in Ballarat. We recognise though that the process of doing so can also be distressing.”

“Other people may be affected by the content of the public hearings and the media coverage that follows, as they remember their own past traumatic experiences,” Ms Douglas said.

“People may need support or counselling when they tell their story to the Commission or if they are otherwise affected by the Royal Commission.”

Survivors of child sexual abuse may be traumatised about what happened to them as a child. Such trauma may have not only affected their lives, but also the lives of their families and communities.

RAV has extensive experience and expertise in providing therapeutic services in relation to trauma and the impact of childhood abuse on individuals and their relationships. RAV is committed to supporting individuals and their family members in a way that is holistic and supports people’s capabilities and insights.

Ms Douglas noted that “it has been important for our service to have a strong emphasis on recovery, to focus on helping people to be able to create and live a meaningful life in their community. The notion of recovery is in fact, important for the community of Ballarat as a whole.”

*Reclaim Support Services* are available to support those affected by the Royal Commission from RAV’s centres in metropolitan and regional Victoria, including RAV’s Ballarat centre.

Support services are also provided by the Ballarat Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA), Ballarat Community Health and Lifeline.

People can make an appointment with *Reclaim* or find out more by calling the dedicated phone number – 1800 052 674.

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