



VICTORIA POLICE

A 'WHOLE STORY' approach  
to understanding and  
investigating sexual assault  
and child sexual abuse.

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Approximately 144,000 Australian women will experience rape and/or sexual assault every year.

Only 1 in 8 (approx) victims will report to police.  
9 out of 10 reports won't make it to Court.

Fewer than 1% of assaults ended with the conviction and imprisonment of the offender.

(ABS 2007)

# SOME CRITICAL MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

- Children will immediately report abuse to a trusted adult
- Children who continue a close relationship with the perpetrator cannot have been abused
- Sexual offending does not take place in close proximity to other people
- 'Paedophiles' are easily identifiable

# SOME CRITICAL MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SEXUAL ASSAULT OF WOMEN

- Rape victims will immediately report to police
- Most perpetrators are strangers
- Adults will clearly remember the event
- Victims will appear visibly distressed
- Rape victims will physically resist
- Forensic 'evidence' will be present

# Countering misconceptions

What are the points where the victim's narrative may be critiqued? (defence, juries, Magistrates etc)

Does the victim statement include explanations of their thoughts, feelings and/or reasons? (rather than just what happened)

# The 'Whole Story' approach

What do juries to hear to make informed decisions?

Currently too much focus on victim –  
credibility/believability/what she did or didn't  
do

Balance the story of the victim and the suspect  
in the minds of jurors – allow them the best  
opportunity for comparison

# The 'Whole Story' approach

- Offending begins in the mind of the offenders (NOT with the behaviour of victims)
- Victims are often unaware of all the ways they were manipulated.
- All offenders attempt to generate the “relationship” they want (It’s not just “do that” – it’s “be like that”)
- Every offending ‘relationship’ is unique

# Relationship AND Events

- Sexual offending is about relationships
- The Criminal Justice System needs to particularise 'events'
- How does this change the way we perceive victim behaviour?

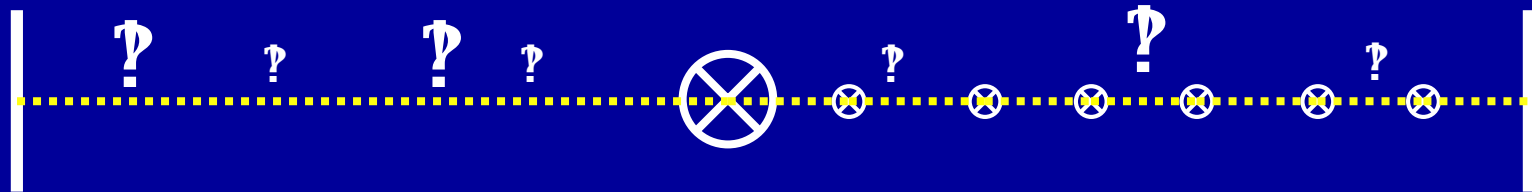


# Victim Behaviour

FIGHT – FLIGHT

FREEZE – SURRENDER

# OFFENDING BEGINS IN THE MINDS OF OFFENDERS!



GROOMING  
UNIQUE SIGNIFIERS  
POINTS OF CONFIRMATION

# Grooming

A concept now familiar from the on-line world

The establishment of power / control / authority

The establishment of a sexual 'relationship'

# Unique signifiers

Each 'relationship' will include unique words, phrases, gestures, rituals, routines, games, names for body parts, names for sexual activities etc.

Memory prompts

Visceral experience of memory

Cognitive load?

# Points of confirmation

An extension of corroboration concept

Points of *Dis*confirmation?

# The Whole Story Approach

Teaching Specialist Detectives to understand the dynamics of sexual assault and child sexual abuse and then to use that understanding to gather the 'Whole Story' so that Courts and Juries can make better informed decisions.

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