



Empowering survivors of sexual assault

The Child and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit (CSAIU) targets the most serious or complex cases of sexual assault of both children and adults, as well as child abuse and unexplained deaths resulting from suspected child abuse.

The CSAIU investigates paedophilic (including historical) activities across the state, and often deals with interstate and international jurisdictions when investigating systemic abuse of children.

Sexual assault is a serious criminal offence often affecting a survivor in complex ways. In many instances, survivors report the offences to police and the offenders are prosecuted. However, in some cases and for a variety of reasons,

survivors may not want to make an official report.

In 2007 the Cold Case and Serial Sex Crime Team implemented the Unreported Sexual Assault Project (Project USA) in partnership with sexual assault support services statewide.

Project USA enables survivors to share the information with police without making an official report. This can be an extremely useful healing strategy for the survivor and an effective investigative strategy for law enforcement agencies. The survivor can feel empowered by knowing that the information could be used to solve or prevent similar offences.

Information received to date has led investigators to review a number of unsolved rapes, and has directly led to the arrest of a 41-year-old North Coast man for rape. Recently three other cold case rapes were also solved.

CSAIU specialist investigators work in teams, as well as having close ties with other relevant agencies. In conjunction with the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (CCYPCG), CSAIU developed an inter-agency Blue Card compliance model for detecting, managing and prosecuting Blue Card offences.

Other recent achievements of CSAIU include supporting the State Coroner to review and investigate

a number of complex sudden child deaths; the arrest of a serial sex offender for the rape of nine females; and supporting the North Coast Region's investigation into a series of unsolved rapes that occurred in the Gympie District from 1995 to 2001. That operation concluded with the identification of a Gympie man responsible for eight of those rape and sexual assaults.

Visit the Queensland Police Service website at www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/crimePrevention/Project_USA.htm if you would like more information on Project USA.

By Detective Inspector Cameron Harsley, Child Abuse Investigation Unit