

FACT SHEET — *This fact sheet is for children, young people, parents, carers, and educators.*

## Questions frequently asked by children and young people

### Why did it happen to me?

You may think it happened to you because of something you did or said. Or you may think it was because of what you were wearing. Sexual assault happens because the other person was older or bigger or stronger than you and they abused their power over you. They might be someone you trusted or believed in or they might be in your family. That person abused your trust to do what they wanted to do. *They knew what they were doing was wrong.* That is why they kept it secret and told you to keep it a secret.

### Why couldn't I say no?

The person might be in your family or someone your family knows, and you didn't want to hurt their feelings or make them angry. This person might be very nice to you or even give you things (bribe you) that make you feel happy or special. Children and young people are taught to be polite and told not to refuse grown-ups. So, it's easy to understand why you couldn't say no. We also know that saying no doesn't always stop the abuse.

### Am I a bad person?

No. If you have been sexually abused it is NEVER your fault. You are not a bad person. Your feelings may be all mixed up and you might even blame yourself. The abuser who is to blame. Always! There are people who can help you deal with your thoughts and feelings. Talking to a trained counsellor can help you deal with the trauma and your conflicting emotions.

### Is my body different now?

Lots of people worry that their body is different — especially their private parts — because of the sexual abuse. You may even wonder if other people can tell what's happened to you. If you feel sore or uncomfortable, or have worries about your body, talk to someone you trust, or a sexual assault counsellor.

### What do I do now?

If you are still being touched in a way you don't like or sexually abused, it's important to tell someone so that it can be stopped. Find an older person that you trust — your parent, a teacher, family member, parent of one of your friends, or the police — and tell them about what's happening. You might have to tell more than one person to get the best help.

### **I did tell someone, but they didn't do anything. What do I do now?**

Sometimes people don't believe what they're hearing, or maybe don't really understand what you're trying to tell them. **DO NOT GIVE UP.** You're very brave for trying to tell, so find another adult. You might have to tell more than one person to get the best help but keep trying. People you could tell: a teacher, a family member, a parent of your friend, the police, or someone from CASA.

### **Will things go back to how they were?**

Some things will be difficult at first and others may even get better, but things will probably not go back to exactly how they were. Also remember as you get older you change naturally too. You may now have anxiety and trust issues. It's very useful to talk to a counsellor at times like this to help you sort through your thoughts and feelings.

### **The person who touched me said if I told I'd get into trouble or that they would hurt someone I love. Is this true?**

That person told you those things to frighten you. They knew what they were doing was wrong and they may try to manipulate you to be quiet. They needed the abuse to be kept secret. It's a bad secret because not only is what they're doing illegal, it makes you feel sad, embarrassed, or mixed up. The only way to stop feeling this way is to tell someone about what has been happening to you.

### **What will happen to the person who did this to me?**

There are specially trained people (police, lawyers, judges) who will help decide what will happen. These people want to make sure that everyone gets the right help. *Most importantly they want you to be safe.* What happens to the person who abused you will not be your decision to make. There are laws in place to decide that. Whatever punishment they get will not be your fault.

### **My friend told me that this happened to them but that I'm not allowed to tell anyone. What do I do?**

Your friend told you because they wanted someone else to know about the secret. It's not dobbing to tell an adult about this type of secret. This is a 'bad' secret because someone is getting hurt. It's okay to tell bad secrets to an adult that you trust. Maybe this is your teacher, someone in your family, or the police. If you're not sure who to tell, call us at CASA for a confidential chat. All our services are free.

### **I've seen someone acting funny around kids. What should I do?**

It's good that you've noticed something that makes you feel uncomfortable and want to do something about it. Don't keep these things to yourself. You're very brave for wanting to keep other kids safe. Tell an adult you trust, such as a teacher, family member, another parent or the police. They will decide what to do. If someone is doing something wrong, and no one ever speaks up about it, then that person can keep behaving in a way that's not right.