



# Laurel House

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT

COUNSELLING • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY • CHANGE

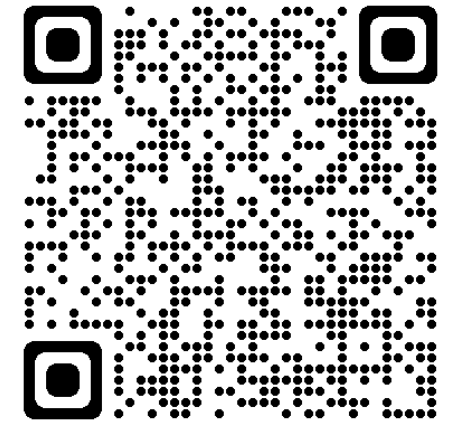
## Recognising and Responding to Sexual Violence against people with disability

Elisha Deegan (Project Officer)



# Acknowledgements

- Laurel House
- People with lived experience
- ILC grant
- Steering committee members
- Content warning and self-care 1800 RESPECT





For Disability  
Support Workers



**Guide to Responding  
to Disclosure of  
Sexual Abuse of an  
Adult with a Disability**

# Disability project at Laurel House

- Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant
- Phase 1 resources
- Current phase focus
- Where to so far

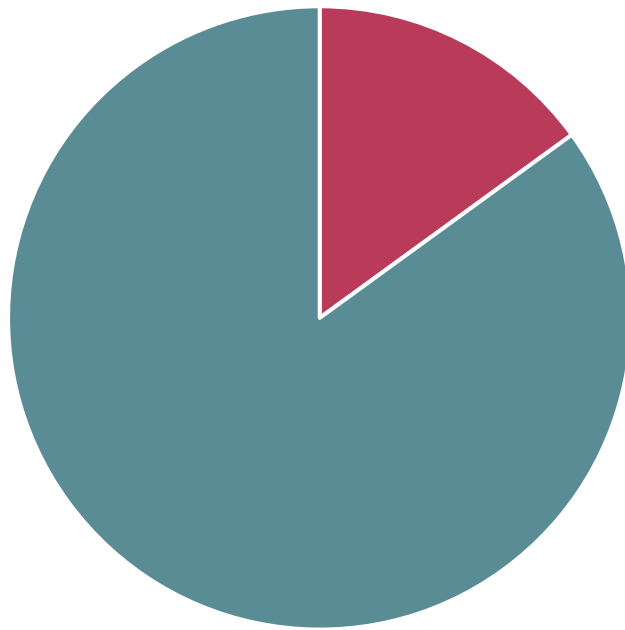


# Disability project at Laurel House

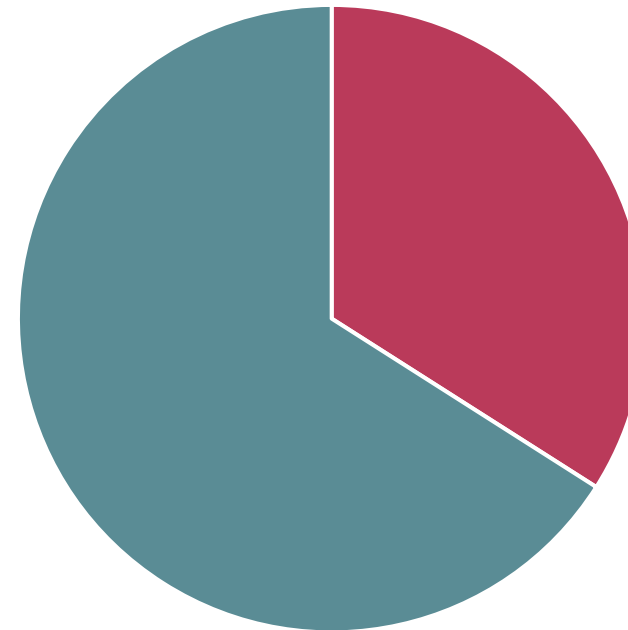
- Guides for responding to disclosure
- Video's
- PowerPoints
- Fact Sheets
- Posters
- Links

# Prevalence

Women and girls over 15 who have experienced sexual violence



Women and girls over 15 **with disabilities** who have experienced sexual violence

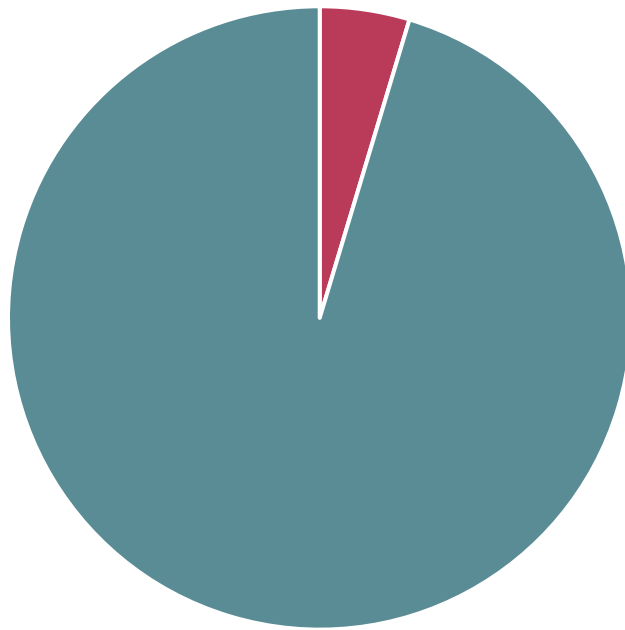


(Our Watch, 2022)

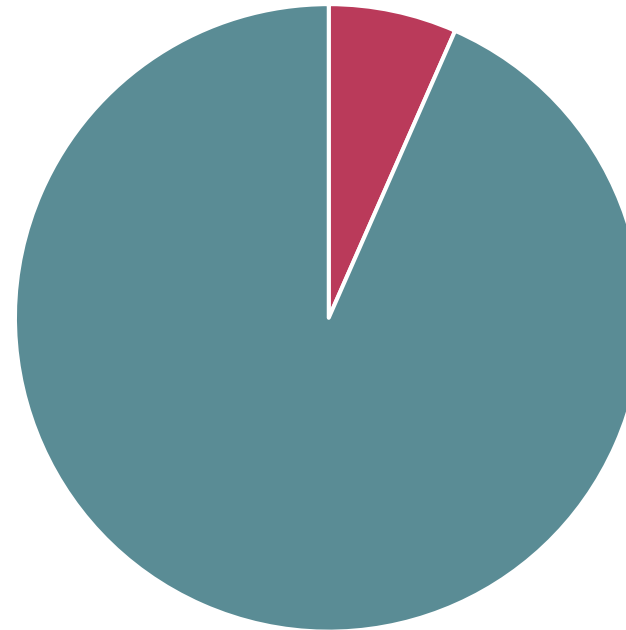


# Prevalence

Men and boys over 15 who have experienced sexual violence



Men and boys over 15 **with disabilities** who have experienced sexual violence



(Our Watch, 2022)



# Drivers of violence

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parenting support  
lack of education about sexuality  
social isolation  
invasion of privacy  
unable to defend from abuse  
communication challenges  
transport  
emotional skills  
knowledge of sexual behaviour norms  
mobility  
income  
reliance on perpetrator  
capacity judgement  
social skills  
assistance for essential care  
marginalised position  
emphasis on compliance  
accessible accomodation  
poor understanding of personal boundaries  
support options

# Disability specific violence

- Threats of or removal of care
- Threats of institutionalization
- Told that police and services won't believe them
- Threats to assistance animals
- Fear that children will be removed
- Restrictive practices
- Removal of equipment
- Withholding of food or fluids

(ABS, 2023, Our Watch 2022b)



# Barriers to disclosure

- Communication
- Recall and articulation
- Fear for loss of independence
- Cultural or religious restrictions
- Fear of not being believed
- Distrust of government or institutions
- Understanding what is abuse
- Fear of loss of children
- Inaccessible reporting mechanisms and or support services



(ABS, 2023, Brunder and Kroese, 2005, Jojo et al. 2023, Our Watch 2022)



# Strategies for reducing violence

- Improved education for children with disabilities
- Education of assertiveness
- Encourage disclosure about anything
- Have open and honest conversations, often
- Ensure people with disability can explore their sexuality
- Ensuring services are accessible and welcoming
- Recognise red flags and react to them

(Brunner and Kroese, 2005, Kelly et al, 2022)



# Red flags

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- Emotional changes
- Behavioral changes
- Unexplained injuries
- Increased isolation
- Fear of particular people
- Contenance or sleep issues



# Australian resources

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- Laurel House
- SECCA
- Women With Disabilities Victoria
- Our watch
- Rosie's place
- People with Disability Australia
- Blue Knot Foundation



# References

- Our Watch, & Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2022, Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.
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