

History

Rosebank began its life as the South West Women's Child Sexual Assault Resource Centre Incorporated, which was formed in March 1985 in response to the concerns felt by women in the area who were dealing with sexually assaulted children and with women who were survivors of incest. The shortage of support services for victims and lack of support for local workers dealing with these issues was the primary concern for this group. The only specific service available was direct intervention carried out by the Department of Youth and Community Services (now known as the Department of Community Services - DoCS) in relation to children.

Initially, the main aims of the group were to:

1. To develop a supportive network of workers concerned about sexual assault.
2. To promote community and worker awareness of Sexual Assault.
3. To investigate the need for further services.

In mid 1985, Amanda Watts and Lauvena Lueng (Social Work students on placement) began collecting statistics and visiting local services to document the need for a specialised sexual assault service in the South West region of Sydney.

As awareness of the extent of the problem increased, the group recognised the need for a more coordinated approach at a local level. This approach led to the local group applying for Commonwealth Employment Programme funding in September 1985, to establish a Community Resource Centre and move towards Incorporation. In April 1986, funds were received from the programme to employ a part-time administrator and two other workers for a period of six months.

Around this time the service was becoming known in the community as "Rosebank Cottage", which was the name of the building in which the group operated. The workers set about establishing the service. Their work included the support of a small number of victims of Child Sexual Assault, developing a Protective Behaviours Puppet show for pre-school age children and writing submissions for future funding.

On 30 October 1986 a public forum was held which was designed to raise community awareness of sexual assault and to gather support for the establishment of a permanent sexual assault centre which could provide counselling for sexually abused children and their non offending family members.

In December 1986, a submission for ongoing funding of the then established South West Women's Child Sexual Assault Resource Centre Inc was submitted to the Department of Youth and Community Services (now DoCS). In May 1987, the Department allocated the funds to employ one full-time worker and cover associated costs, for six months until December 1987. Initially, the role of the worker was to provide resources and information to the community and other workers in the area. However, towards the end of 1987, the focus of the centre changed with the service becoming further involved in the provision of direct counselling.

The service spent the next nine years focusing on the provision of direct counselling and other relevant support services.

In mid 1996, the NSW Child Protection Council was formed. This agency distributed funding on behalf of the Department of Youth and Community Services (now DoCS) to organisations providing Child Sexual Assault services. The guidelines required services to give priority to the provision of counselling services to victims and non-offending family members. The Service began to receive its core funding through this channel.

In 1998, the service changed its name. Whilst our official name at the time was still South West Women's Child Sexual Assault Resource Centre Inc, we had become informally known as 'Rosebank Cottage' (as we were based in the heritage building named 'Rosebank'), which caused confusion and proved cumbersome. Therefore, in September 1998, at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), staff and Management Committee voted to rename the organisation **Rosebank Child Sexual Abuse Service Inc.**

In March 2001, 'Rosebank' (the Liverpool Council property we had been operating from for sixteen years) was declared too dangerous for the staff and clients to continue there. The heritage building, affected by rising damp and termites, had been deteriorating over many years. The Service then moved to another Council facility (the Memorial School of Arts Building) as a temporary measure, until more appropriate long-term accommodation could be found.

In 2003-04, the organisation underwent a significant change process, whereby it was restructured from a flat collective model of management, to a co-ordinated management model. In January 2004, the Service Co-ordinator position was created.

Securing long-term premises remained a top priority for the Service, which remained in the School of Arts Building from 2001. In 2004-05, local architect Frank Mosca approached the Service with the idea of restoring the heritage 'Rosebank' building (17 Speed St, Liverpool) so that we could return to where we had begun. Despite much effort and exploration of possibilities throughout 2005-06, this project was discontinued in February 2006.

Following Liverpool Council's decision to rescind approval to grant a lease for the 'Rosebank' building, Council offered the Service a 5 year licence agreement and committed funds to renovate the Rosebank office and counselling space (upstairs section of the School of Arts Building). At long last, Rosebank seems to have secure premises until 2011.

Our thanks continue to go to all the people who have contributed their effort, passion and resources to establish the service and maintain operations.