

MEDIA RELEASE

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Men's Health Week offers Hope

This year for Men's Health Week, Family Planning Queensland's Cairns Sexual Assault Service is lifting the lid to support men who have experienced sexual violence.

The Cairns Sexual Assault Service is often assumed to provide services for women only. However, the service responds to calls and counsels men as well, whose needs are great -- and often not met.

According to internationally recognised men's sexual assault expert, Dr Gary Foster, "Research indicates that 1 in 6 men experience sexual assault as a child or adolescent. We know from Australian research that sexual abuse can have a profound impact on these men's lives and that they are reluctant to talk about it, typically taking 10 years longer than women. Over 70% have never told anyone."

Last week, Family Planning Queensland's Cairns Sexual Assault Service convened more than 75 people in an effort to raise awareness about male survivors and discuss how to tailor services to meet their unique needs.

International expert, Dr Gary Foster, spoke at the forum 'Lifting the Lid: Supporting men who have experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse'. Dr Foster addressed delegates about the profound impact sexual violence can have on men's lives, and the need to work with men to build a positive sense of self.

"We were overwhelmed by the strong response and turnout at last week's forum, with 80 service providers in attendance," explains Family Planning Queensland Cairns Sexual Assault Service Coordinator, Clare Oppy.

"The forum opened up the dialogue amongst providers who want to expand their services to include men, and combat the shame and stigma men often feel about being assaulted. The overarching message we wish for all boys and men to hear is there are a growing number of caring and appropriate services available to provide needed support. This is a particularly important message to communicate during Men's Health Week," Ms Oppy continued.

'Lifting the Lid' took place at the Shangri La Hotel in Cairns, on Wednesday 9 June. Chief Superintendent of Police, Paul Taylor, opened the forum.

Guest speakers Dr Gary Foster of Brisbane's Living Well; Nick Wymarra of Wuchopperen Health Service; and Peter Ashley of Cairns Sexual Health Service from Queensland Health, alongside Clare Oppy, Cairns Sexual Assault Service Coordinator are available for interview.

For further information, please contact Clare Oppy on 07 4031 3590 or cnssexualassault@fpq.com.au.

Supporting children, women and men who have experienced sexual assault.