

**A** YOUNG MAN presents himself at his local Police station and states that he has been raped by another man. After answering a furlong of questions fired at him by an officer who seems somewhat disbelieving of the responses he is given (Are you gay? What did you do to encourage him? Why were you there in the first place?), he is taken to a local rape crisis centre for examination by a forensic doctor. As it is a relatively normal procedure for a rape victims' clothing to be seized as evidence or for further forensic testing, rape crisis centres keep clothing to replace those seized. On removal of his underwear, the young man is given a pair of ladies panties to put on.

was asking for it!), and the issue of a wife's "duties" in regard to her husband's sexual needs. And while all this debate has had positive overall outcomes for women, it has also caused general stereotyping about who can and cannot be raped. It appears that in the minds of the masses the only role men play in rape is that of perpetrator, never that of victim, and this is where the problems begin.

While Governments have been eager to fund rape crisis services for women, the issue of male rape has long been overlooked and disbelieved, which puts a male rape survivor in a no mans' land (no pun intended!). Although male rape survivors have shared experiences with

women who are raped (loss of power, anger, fear etc.),

bility for their assault. As men we are meant to be able to "take care of ourselves", and a rape can cause men to feel they have "failed" as men because they were overpowered physically and sexually. We tend to feel we are responsible for the rape because as men we should have been able to fight our attacker off (if not hospitalise him!).

### isolation

As male rape is an issue that is only just being acknowledged within the community, men are likely to see themselves as the only man who has ever been raped. This isolation is internalised by many men and can impact on a variety of areas in mens' lives.

### power and powerlessness

As men we are meant to be powerful, and while rape is about

# male

# rape

As participants in a patriarchal society, we have set ourselves up to allow the above scenario to take place. As men, we gauge our success in regard to how different we are from women, and are given very clear messages about what is masculine or feminine behaviour: Real men don't eat quiche, boys don't cry, women are passive while men are aggressive. What these messages are saying in regard to rape is that men cannot be raped, and that any man that is raped by another man is assumed to be either gay (You were asking for it. You wanted it.), or weak (You should have fought him off).

Rape has always been a contentious issue within the Government, the Judiciary and the general community since the evolution of the Feminist Movement, when women took control over their bodies and decided that "No means No". Debate has been fast and furious for years around what constitutes rape, the female victim's "role" in the rape (short skirt and high heels-she

men who experience sexual assault have a range of issues that are unique to their experience, and even those experiences shared with female rape survivors impact differently on men. Rape effects men on a number of levels depending on how they personally have been conditioned, and their own self-perceptions due to that conditioning.

*so what issues are men faced with when they are raped?*

### responsibility

Men who are raped are likely to experience a feeling of responsi-

power as opposed to sex, men who experience this loss of power see themselves once again as "failures" as men because they were not in control of the situation. This is not discounting a woman's feelings of powerlessness when she is assaulted, but in men this feeling can manifest itself in more outwardly destructive ways. A man's feeling of powerlessness after a rape can often result in that man becoming more aggressive, even to the point where he is violent, or over time may become a perpetrator himself depending on the various circumstances around his assault (ie. his age at the time of the attack; what values/role models he was raised with; sex of the perpetrator; his present personal values and in-built coping mechanisms, etc.). These type of behaviours are often a reaction



to that loss of power, and a way to reclaim the power that was taken from them.

### questioning of sexuality

Men who are raped (in particular heterosexual men) often question their sexuality, especially when they have been assaulted by another man. Men tend to take on board that they did something that attracted their attacker to them, something that suggested that they were 'gay and available'. This in turn can impact on relationships (both sexual and non-sexual with men and women), and lead to sexual problems. Often during a sexual assault, a man will ejaculate. If ejaculation occurs it is more a reaction to their fear than of sexual excitement. Men often take the fact that ejaculation has occurred and perceive it as an indication they are in fact homosexual (I came...I must have enjoyed it...I must be gay), rather than a physical sign of their terror.

misplaced homophobic tendencies. This is most common in heterosexual men, who can become aggressive or even violent when confronted with a gay man. This is in spite of the fact that rape is about power and the bulk of perpetrators in a male to male rape scenario identify themselves as heterosexual.

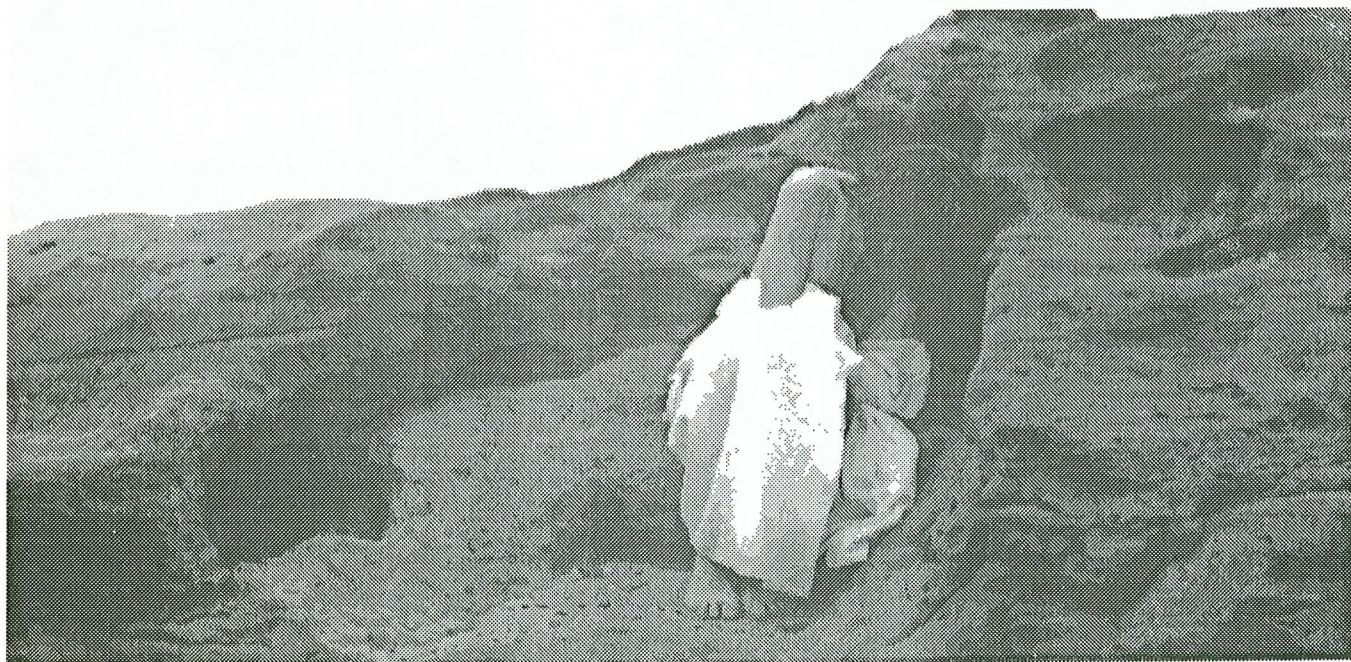
### lack of services

As rape is still perceived as something that only happens to women, there are no services that deal specifically with male rape survivors in Victoria. While some rape crisis services will deal with men, the approach is from a woman's point of view, usually with the counsellor being female (which is not always appropriate for male survivors). In some cases, men who present themselves at rape crisis centres that are willing to deal with male survivors, can find themselves dealing with a female counsellor who treats them with

sexual assault. Like aggression, this is obviously a self destructive path to follow, but when you consider our conditioning and the lack of services, what other options do we have?

## *the future for male rape survivors*

**A**T A RECENT FORUM about male rape, around 100 community workers, social workers, youth workers, Police and rape counsellors were in attendance. All of these people had, at some time or another, dealt with male rape survivors. This in itself is an indication that the issue of male rape is one that clearly needs to be addressed. One of the common problems identified by those at the forum was the non-existence of appropriate services that deal with male rape



### fear of other men

Like women, men can experience a fear of men after an assault. The outcome for men is that they have problems trusting other men, and therefore establishing and/or maintaining "mateship" with other men. This further impacts on feelings of isolation.

### homophobia

Men who experience rape by another man will often manifest

an attitude of contempt (men are PERPETRATORS NOT VICTIMS) which compounds once again on feelings of isolation and responsibility. A man who discloses that he is a sex worker and was raped in a commercial setting faces further judgement and isolation (You're a prostitute. What did you expect?).

### drug and alcohol abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse is another way men "cope" with the ordeal of

victims and survivors. Indeed it is up to Governments to fund appropriate services, but this is unlikely to happen until more is known about the issue and the impact it has on those affected by it. In order for this to happen, men need to be able to feel safe about disclosing rape, and when you consider how men are conditioned (not to mention all of the above) this is unlikely to happen for quite some time.