

## Kathy's Case Study.

This case involved the sexual abuse of Kathy over a twenty-year period by David. The abuse began when Kathy was aged 12. David conducted his business in a shop he rented from Kathy's parents who lived in the residence above this shop. David, through manipulation and deceit, maintained almost complete control and influence over Kathy.

When Kathy eventually disclosed, David was charged and imprisoned for a minimum of three years. Kathy's life became even more difficult and confusing. Her experience of the court process was not what she had hoped for. She managed to contact Senior Sergeant Terry O'Connell who eventually arranged a restorative conference in December 1996 at the Sydney Police Centre; some six months after Kathy's initial contact.

There were twenty-nine participants in the conference, it lasted five hours. Her parents, sister and cousins as well as her psychologist and counsellor, supported Kathy. David was transported from Junee prison and supported by two prison psychologists. His wife and three adult sons also participated. David did not accept responsibility as he rationalised his behaviour around Kathy being a 'consenting' adult, a notion completely rejected by other conference participants.

The conference was a significant moment in Kathy's life. She wrote:

*"I am free. I am aware now how the deceit and the physical, emotional and spiritual corruption of my life had moulded my perceptions, my decision-making and my behaviour. The deceit and corruption officially and metaphorically ended that night. I am now free to perceive, decide and behave in a way appropriate to myself and not the perpetrator of my life."*

When asked about the benefits she felt others may have taken from their conference experience Kathy wrote:

*"my father in particular released his disgust and outrage at the source [David] and no longer myself. My mother at least was given a chance to experience my pain, my development and my life. As parents, that had a chance to reflect. Since then, their behaviour has changed in a positive way, not just to myself, but also to the other children. My sister is no longer in the darkness and her decisions will now be understood by herself."*

Perhaps the most poignant moment of the conference was when Kathy stood and turned to a vacant chair [next to her] and read a 'eulogy' to Kathy the twelve-year-old child. In what was a very emotional experience for all, Kathy's final words to the child were:

*"It is okay now, you have a voice. Finally you have been believed. You don't have to worry any more. Go now and rest."*