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## ANZATSA Bi-Annual Conference 2017

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The bi-annual ANZATSA conference took place from the 28th November – 1st December in Auckland, New Zealand. The conference was a real mix of practice and research emphasising the role of prevention, risk management, protective factors and an emphasis for an understanding of the needs of aboriginal/traditional communities in working with perpetrators of sexual harm. The conference was very international in nature with speakers and attendees coming from New Zealand, Australia, pacific islands, Singapore, USA, UK as well as The Netherlands.

The plenary sessions focused on the need to reframe sexual harm as being more than just a criminal justice issue, with speakers emphasising the need for a public health approach (Elizabeth Letourneau, Jill Levenson, Maia Christopher); how we reframe the socio-political debate (Maia Christopher); a need to think about the role of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences in the lives of perpetrators (Elizabeth Letourneau, Jill Levenson, Alissa Ackerman); how we need to build protective factors into the management and rehabilitation of perpetrators (Elizabeth Letourneau, Jill Levenson, Michiel de Vries Robbe); the need to listen to and re-evaluate our understanding of sexual harm in the context of traditional/aboriginal communities (Bryon Seiuli, Marlene Lauw, Pam Greer, Linda Waimarie Nikora) and the importance of how we listen to victims/survivors and incorporate their actual lived experiences into how we respond to sexual harm (Alissa Ackerman). The plenaries emphasised that we have reached a watershed moment in international and transitional conversations around sexual harm and that we need to reframe these issues more appropriately.

As we have said before, there are more things that unite our experiences in the field of sexual harm than divides us. We just



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### **SAJRT Bloggers' Profile**

*We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.*

*The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.*

*The views expressed on this blog are of the bloggers and are not necessarily those of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research & Treatment, or Sage Journals.*

need to open our eyes, ears, and hearts to learn and adapt from each other's good (and bad) practice. One tone that remained present throughout the ANSATZA conference was that anyone and everyone with knowledge about sexual harm knows that current policies such as registration, notification, and residence restrictions aren't working in the USA, arguing strongly that these should not be imported as is to other countries internationally.

ANZATSA 2017 kicked off with a public engagement event prior to the start of the conference, where the film "Untouchable" was screened. The documentary screening was followed by a panel discussion with Jill Levenson, Alissa Ackerman, Mark Hutton and Marlene Lauw. It was developed and lead by Gwenda Willis as well as her colleagues in the "Advancing Sexual Abuse Prevention". The event was a great success with members of the public mixing with attendees at ANZATSA and really emphasising the importance of informed and constructive sexual harm policies; therefore, reinforcing and emphasising the main themes of the conference.

Many of the conference breakout sessions and workshops this year seemed to emphasis treatment, risk assessment and risk management. The conference had presentations on the management of individuals who have committed sexual harm, registration and monitoring (Shephard; Hutton, Laws, Derby & Ross), female sexual abusers (Darling), understanding the sexual abuser as the service user (McCartan, Prescott & Harris), desistence (Harris), protective factors (Dickson & Willis), risk assessment (Helmus), adolescents who sexually harm (Lambie & Tolcher; Kelly, Shumack & Evans; Tolliday; Firmin; de Larcerda Mottin), perpetrators from aboriginal/traditional communities (Tofaeono; Jamisetty, Tamatea & Boer), and the role, as well as impact, of pornography (Pratt & Hollis; Fernandes; Prescott) to name a few.

Additionally, several sessions focused on the needs of survivors of sexual violence, including the need for trauma informed approaches to working with clients. This was an exciting aspect of the conference, as presenters represented multiple countries, including New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and the United States.

Of course, the conference location (New Zealand) ensured that there would be an emphasis on the assessment and treatment of indigenous people. One can read about this in books, but there is nothing like the actual dialog of a conference setting. Conference Co-Chair Armon Tamatea, for example, made a number of excellent points as he examined the process of risk assessment both inside and outside the cultural space of Maori life. These ranged from the use of diagnoses developed well outside of Maori culture to the pathologizing aspects for indigenous peoples of considering risk in isolation from protective factors and the cultural context of community and family.

The primary take-away from these experiences for all of us is the importance of redefining the field of sexual harm to being an inclusive, multidisciplinary arena that talks across the reality of sexual abuse and allows us to share good practice and learn from each other. What became apparent is that we all agree that we need to change the narrative as well as perception around sexual harm and that now, with all the issues being addressed in society, is the time to start doing this collectively. Of course, a truly multidisciplinary approach starts with each of us being able to collaborate with one another.