

NEWS

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Support for survivors

Dr Stuart Kidd was forced into early retirement after a lifetime of mental illness stemming from sexual abuse as a child. He wants to help others.

BY B.C. LEWIS

EX-Gogglebox TV show star and retired doctor, Stuart Kidd, wants men in the Mountains to know there is help for child abuse victims.

Dr Kidd, 59, an assistant orthopaedic surgeon from the Lower Mountains, said childhood trauma, including abuse, affects an estimated five million Australian adults, according to the Blue Knot Foundation. Many don't survive it.

"I'm a doctor whose not ashamed to say I've had a mental illness stemming from the childhood abuse," he said.

He retired from his job early last year "because all the childhood trauma was erupting ... it came out of the blue as it often does".

He was abused from age four, for nine years on and off by different people.

"I tried to suicide at 11 three times," he said. "I've been through hell and back [but] I wanted to give something back and have been on a couple of local committees [the Local Division of General Practice and the Youth Mental Illness and Substance Abuse collaborative] to set up funding for psychological difficulties, and to help youth because there was nothing around when I was young."

Dr Kidd strongly advocates sufferers contact Survivors And Mates

Support Network (SAMSN), a Parramatta-based group formed in 2010 by a small group of survivors of child sexual assault concerned that there was little, if any, practical support for men who had been victims of paedophiles as boys or teens.

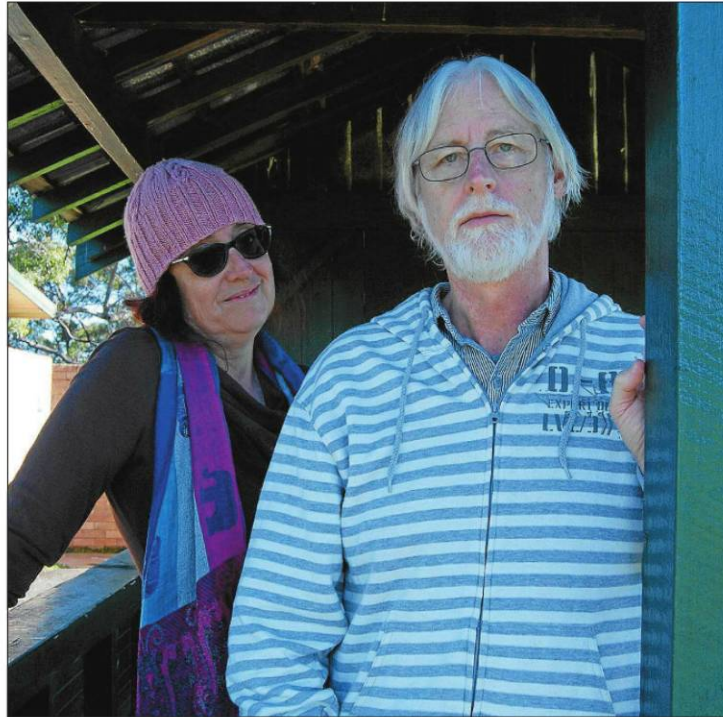
At the heart of SAMSN's work is a series of eight-week support groups for eight to 10 men held several times a year in Newcastle, Erskineville, Gosford, Liverpool, Granville, Wollongong and Adelaide, where men share their life experience in a safe environment facilitated by two specifically trained male psychologists during structured weekly teachings.

He is in the process of completing his second course with the group.

"I stumbled across SAMSN through a *Sydney Morning Herald* article during the Royal Commission [into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in 2013]."

The group had been invaluable, as had "psychiatrists, psychologists, meditation, the church, my faith... and I wouldn't be here many times over without [wife] Janet."

Dr Kidd said the Royal Commission had exposed "so much of the evil that had been hidden in religious and educational institutions but the cruel and tragic reality is that, unlike mine, so much more abuse is actually being perpetrated within the



WANTS TO HELP OTHERS: Dr Stuart Kidd with his wife Janet.

“

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Dr Stuart Kidd

family".

"It's far more likely that a little boy - or girl - is being molested not by the priest,

the teacher or scout leader but in fact by a father, a brother, an uncle, cousin or grandfather. And this has to

stop."

He said that was not the case in his situation. The perpetrators had also not been punished.

"Some of it wasn't possible to litigate ... and the litigation process is extremely traumatic so I haven't gone down that path."

SAMSN is funded by the NSW Government's Victims Services Department and helps men with legal issues, housing assistance, liaising with Centrelink and facilitating both compensation and funding for counselling by therapists professionally trained in assisting victims of child sexual assault.

"As a medical student, young doctor, raising a family, working in Nepal there just weren't the knowledge or resources for dealing with the debilitating anxiety, depression, panic, terror, flashbacks, addictions and suicidality that are the hallmarks of the legacy of sexual abuse," Dr Kidd said.

"But now, with organisations like SAMSN, and the Blue Knot Foundation, there is so much more help available to alleviate the often intolerable suffering that survivors endure."

Wife, Janet, said life with Stuart was "an emotional rollercoaster, I never know who I'm married to".

He said the few times he mentioned his childhood experience on the reality TV show on Network Ten they were edited out. But the show's team had been very supportive of his trauma and there were days he could not appear on camera "and hid upstairs".

"I had hoped it [Gogglebox] would have been a platform to speak publicly about it ... why isn't it talked about? Well, the Royal Commission has gone a long way to make sure it is talked about.

"I hope someone like myself speaking out ... well I've come far enough to know I was just a little boy who was horrifically raped through no fault of my own. It takes years of therapy and counselling."

He said he hoped his message might be life saving for those who had been through the same trauma. For more details go to www.samsn.org.au or www.blueknot.org.au. Helpline: 1800 4 SAMSN (72 676) or 1300 657 380.

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