Laurel House Northern Sexual Assault Service Tasmania

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the 'Sexual Offences Against Young People' paper and the follow statement outlines our response.

Laurel House Northern Sexual Assault Service Tasmania agrees with the comments made by The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and National Association for the Services Against Sexual Violence in relation to the mistake as to age defence.

-       There should be no defence of mistake as to age.

-       Our experience of working with victims of sexual assault of all ages supports the view that the claim of mistake as to age is frequently made in an attempt to avoid punishment.

-       Our experience supports the view that sexual exploitation of minors is widespread and intentional.

-       The stated intention or belief of the perpetrator is irrelevant in regard to the impact on the victim.

In relation to amending the offence of maintaining a sexual relationship, Laurel House agrees that the offence be renamed ‘persistent sexual abuse of a child’. This more accurately describes the behaviour and the status of the victim.

Yours faithfully

Marg Dean and Rachael Portsmouth (Senior Counsellor Educator)

Manager                                                   
Laurel House, Northern Sexual Assault Group Inc

PO Box 1062                                                                 
LAUNCESTON Tas 7250                                          
Ph:  03 6334 2740                                                       
Fax: 03 6334 4234

Acting Manager  
North West Centre Against Sexual Assault

PO Box 499

BURNIE Tas  7320

Ph:  03 64319711

Fax: 03 64318710

Email:  [manager@nwcasa.org.au](mailto:manager@nwcasa.org.au)