

Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

The Committee,
Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.

On behalf of Child Wise, Australia's leading child abuse prevention agency, I wish to thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the *Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations*. The Committee has the chance to become a seminal moment in the fight against child abuse, and I am pleased to share Child Wise's expertise in the field of child abuse prevention.

Child Wise has been working to end the sexual abuse of children for over twenty years. We run the National Child Abuse Prevention Helpline, a service which operates across Australia to allow people to obtain advice, support, and to speak up about child abuse. Child Wise has run tens of thousands of training and education sessions on creating Child Safe Organisations for thousands of organisations in Australia and across South-East Asia.

Attached is Child Wise's submission to the *Inquiry*. It includes two copies of:

- The submission document.
- Choose With Care® Training Manual.
- 12 Steps to a Child Safe Organisation.
- Wise Up to Child Sexual Abuse Brochure.
- Training Brochure.

The submission document has also been emailed to the Committee.

If you wish to discuss Child Wise's Prevention Model further, please contact me at office@childwise.net or on (03) 9645 8911. I would be pleased to make an appearance at the Committee and answer any questions you may have.

Child Wise is grateful for the Committee's consideration of our submission, and awaits your response.

Yours faithfully,

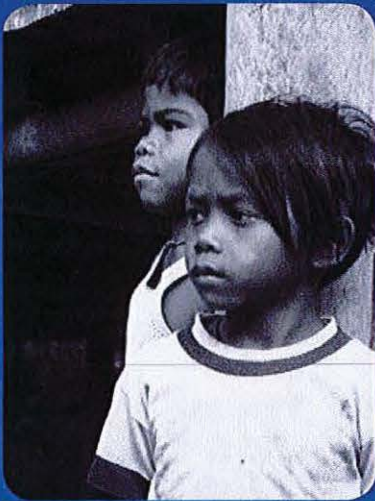


Bernadette McMenamin AO,

CEO and Founder of Child Wise.



Child Wise Submission to the Victorian Inquiry into the Handling of
Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.



Building Safer Organisations for Children

1. About Child Wise

Child Wise is Australia's leading international child protection charity committed to the prevention and reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of children both within Australia and around the world. Child Wise's primary focus is to prevent abuse before it happens.

Our programs are child-focused, award-winning and informed by a fundamental belief that children have a right to physical and psychological safety.

Child Wise has been responsible for many outstanding achievements in the protection of children both in Australia and overseas. In recognition, Child Wise has been the recipient of many awards, which include:

- 2005 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award (Certificate of Merit)
- 2003 Overall winner of the National Child Protection Awards (for the Choose with Care® program)
- 2002 Victorian Crime Prevention Award (Certificate of Merit)
- 1999 Australian Council for Overseas Aid Human Rights Award
- 1996 Australian Human Rights Award
- 1995 The Australian Tourism Award
- 1993 Anti Slavery Award



2. Background

It is Child Wise's contention that individuals and organisations which have been complicit in child sexual abuse have not done so in a vacuum. It is through organisational cultures of secrecy, denial and ignorance that child sex offenders gain access to our children. The lack of strong Child Protection Standards for organisations and institutions is a critical issue. Child Protection Standards for organisations and institutions will act to prevent the future abuse of children.

Child Wise believes there is an urgent need to shift the paradigm away from a focus on child protection, to one that emphasises child abuse prevention. It is a shift that requires education, training, and community awareness. Children and adults need to be empowered to speak up against child abuse.

Community awareness of child abuse has been steadily growing over recent decades, and as awareness grows, the silence and secrecy that traditionally surrounds child abuse is being challenged. Yet despite increasing awareness of child abuse, many organisations remain at risk of being targeted by child sex offenders. Only with knowledge and understanding can prevention and child protection strategies be implemented.

Child Wise's experience over twenty years, and in research undertaken since 1994, is that people will not speak up about child abuse if they don't trust the outcome, process, transparency, and confidentiality of an organisation's reporting process.

Child Safe Organisations.

A Child Safe Organisation is committed to protecting children in its care. It understands the nature and risks of child abuse and has an open and aware culture. Child abuse can be discussed and reported safely. Policies and procedures are developed to protect children and staff. Establishing and maintaining a child safe environment is the main consideration in all of its activities and management practices.

A Child Safe Organisation will develop a Child Protection Policy & Procedures. It will put policy into practice, ensuring all service users and participants are aware of the organisational policy and commitment to child protection. In an organisation with a culture of child safety, voicing a concern is not viewed as an accusation. Staff and volunteers have confidence that their concerns will be dealt with professionally and confidentially.

Implementing organisational change can have many challenges. At the heart of the Child Safe Organisation is commitment; a commitment not just at management level - though that it is essential - but an overall commitment to child safety by all participants. This commitment can be reinforced with child abuse prevention models that are both accountable and transparent.

Submission.

Child Wise's submission to the Victorian Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations is based on our experience of running national child abuse prevention programs over twenty years. This experience has led to our award-winning Choose With Care® program which is the national benchmark for best practice when creating Child Safe Organisations.

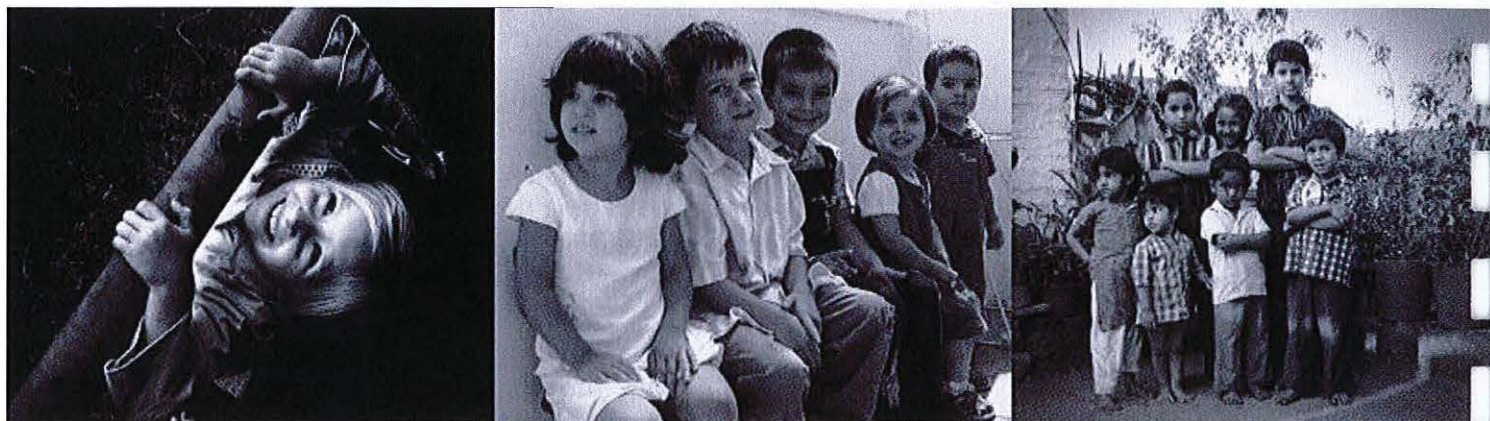
In line with our emphasis on child abuse prevention, this submission will focus on the Terms of Reference Submission Guide:

- Section 11.
- Section 12.
- Section 13.
- Section 14.
- Section 15.
- Section 16.

Some of the state Government departments we have worked with include: DHS, the Department of Education, and ... We have also worked with a number of Federal Government departments including: FaHCSIA,

However, as Child Wise has provided support to a wide range of organisations, some of which have approached us in response to an incident, we are required to respect our confidential dealings with our clients. As such, we are unable to name specific organisations that we work with or have worked with in the past.

In addition to this submission, Child Wise has attached the Choose With Care® Training Manual, and supporting documentation (including details of training, policy, and certification work we undertake) that outlines our Child Abuse Prevention Model and framework for creating Child Safe Organisations.



3. Section 11 - Responses to Reports of Child Abuse.

11. Current policies, protocols and frameworks.

An effective Child Protection Policy, properly implemented, is one of the best ways to ensure an organisation is child safe in its practices and activities. Child Wise's submission in this section consists of two parts. Part one will outline Child Wise's observations and experiences of the current level of child protection policies within Victorian organisations and institutions. Part two will detail Child Wise's recommendations and examples of best practice child protection policies and how they should be implemented.

As there is no comprehensive research or database of current policies, protocols, frameworks and/or charters currently in use within Victorian religious and secular non-government organisations, Child Wise relies on first hand experience in providing support for organisations for an understanding of this area.

Part 1.

In our experience, an organisational child protection policy will typically fall into one of three categories:

1. No policy and/or no surrounding procedures.
2. Policies and procedures that are scattered across a number of different documents: sexual harassment, recruitment, discipline, social media, etc.
3. Comprehensive policies which cover some/all aspects of child protection, to varying degrees of effectiveness.

The vast majority of organisations who we work with have policies that are in the first and second categories, where there are no or fragmented policies. This applies to organisations of all sizes, from small child care centres or sporting clubs, through to large state or national level bodies that operate throughout Victoria, Australia, and internationally.

Frequently, ineffective policies are not due to deliberate avoidance or obstructionism, but to a lack of resources and/or understanding of how child abuse can best be prevented within an organisation. Many organisations mean well and seek to provide safe environments but may take safety for granted and are unaware of the risks, or do not have the capacity to develop child safe environments effectively.

There are no current legislation or frameworks, state or federal, which stipulate Child Protection Standards for organisations and institutions. The lack of clarity over what a child protection policy should cover, how they should be implemented, and who is required to have one, has led to widespread confusion and lack of consistency.

Even within an industry (for instance, child care), there are often no coherent requirements or frameworks for putting in place a child protection policy. The lack of standards across an industry, let alone across the state as a whole, is one of the major obstacles to creating Child Safe Organisations.

We also find that many organisations and institutions are resistant to change. The biggest obstacle to effective prevention of child abuse is the organisational culture. Cultures of secrecy, denial, and of ignorance can be extremely difficult to overcome. No matter how robust the policies, protocols and frameworks that an organisation adopts, if there is not a willingness to embrace them, they will be ineffectual and, by creating a false sense of security, potentially harmful for an organisation. The challenge of working to overcome organisational cultures is discussed in section 16.

Staff or employees who are concerned about abuse will not report if they feel that their allegation will be ignored, covered up, dealt with inappropriately, handled in a way that is not confidential, or not listened to. Organisations who do not have clear and transparent reporting mechanisms in place are creating environments that make children vulnerable to abuse. In Section 16 we detail the common gaps or failings in child protection policies and Child Safe Organisations in general.

It is Child Wise's experience that the largest institutional bodies are the most resistant to change and are often extremely insular. In particular, the various Church bodies (Anglican and Catholic) have been unwilling or unable to create the transparency and accountability, both internally and externally, that is required for effective child protection.

Part 2.

Child Wise has worked with dozens of Victorian, Australian, and international organisations to review, develop, and create individual child protection policies and surrounding procedures. Child Wise created AusAID's Child Protection Policy and framework, which has set a precedent among international development operators that requires all AusAID funded partners to implement child protection policies. This was based on Child Wise's Choose With Care® model.

There are principles that should lie at the heart of every child protection policy, no matter what industry, organisation, or institution it is for. Any organisation or institution whose work interacts with or impacts on children either directly or indirectly must have a child protection policy.

A policy should be considered as part of a broader process: training and education, policy development, implementation and monitoring are all critical elements when creating a Child Safe Organisation. The final stage should be Certification, which ensures implementation and continuous improvement. Any of these elements in isolation will risk failure when not reinforced by a whole of organisation approach to child abuse prevention.

A policy is a living document, which must always be tailored to the organisation. There is no point to a policy that is long and cumbersome, for it will not get used. Depending on the size of the organisation, a child protection policy may be four pages, or it may extend to twenty pages that covers more ground. Frequently, it is broken into two elements: a policy document; and a set of frequently reviewed and updated procedures that guide how to apply the policy in practice.

Effective child protection policies can act in two key ways to create a Child Safe Organisation:

1. Deterrence: Sex offenders and groomers will target vulnerable organisations: they look for access and opportunity. Most offenders look for organisations that do not have adequate procedures or where staff do not have training in child protection. Organisations that have clear and transparent policies and procedures, that advertise and promote themselves as being child safe, will be much more effective at deterring potential offenders.

2. Prevention: While strong policies and procedures can help to deter most offenders, a policy can also act to prevent, reduce, and minimise the opportunities for child abuse to occur within an organisation. Transparent, open, and accountable reporting processes, risk management systems, and complaints procedures will all help to build a culture of child abuse prevention within an organisation and overcome those barriers of secrecy, denial, and ignorance that prevent an organisation from becoming child safe.

A policy should be a statement of the organisation's commitment to children and young peoples safety outlining the strategies the organisation will use to meet this commitment. While each policy should be tailored to the organisation and their programs or activities, there are six key areas that all effective policies should encompass:

- i. Child Safe Risk Assessments.
- ii. Codes of Conduct (including professional boundaries).
- iii. Child Safe Recruitment.
- iv. Managing of Complaints.
- v. How to respond to disclosures.
- vi. The empowerment of children and staff to "Speak Up Against Child Abuse".

A policy is only effective if it is embraced by all tiers of staff and volunteers, and the processes outlined within the policy are accountable and transparent. When developing or reviewing a policy as many stakeholders as possible from the organisation should be included, from staff at all levels to volunteers and children themselves.

While a policy can be considered an overarching, organisational wide framework and statement on child abuse prevention, there should also be surrounding procedures in place. Procedures are essentially the child protection policy put into practice.

These may be for individual activities specific to programs run by the organisation, or it may be for the organisation as a whole. Examples of these include:

- A toilet procedure for children at a day care centre: they must always go in groups of two or three.
- Cyber Safety: who can access what, how to deal with disclosures online, etc.
- Medical examination procedure: children should not be examined unless in the presence of a parent, guardian, or another health professional.

These procedures should be based on an organisation's own risk assessment of their activities. and management practices, and should be tailored to their needs. They should be designed by the organisation, and may differ within an industry: they act as a safeguard for staff and children.

A policy should never be a standalone document. It must be considered part of an organisational approach, which includes training so staff can understand, recognise, and respond to child abuse incidents, procedures, and ensure that continuous improvement processes are built into the process of child abuse prevention. This should entail regular reviews, avenues for changes to the policy to occur outside a review, and clear ways for staff, children, young people and parents to be involved in any review process.

3. Section 12 - Investigating Reports of Child Abuse.

12. Internal Investigation of Allegations of Child Abuse.

Child Wise has encountered a number of institutions that have strong internal investigation procedures in place, designed to establish as much information as possible about allegations of abuse so that staff may follow internal processes to resolve complaints. In our opinion this is a highly dangerous practice.

As discussed in submission section 11 above, a child protection policy should detail how to respond to disclosures, and how to manage complaints or allegations within an organisation. This should outline at what point external agencies (be they Child FIRST, Child Protection, or the Police) must be informed of the allegation. By dealing with an allegation of abuse solely through internal structures, the culture of secrecy, denial, and ignorance that pervades many institutions is reinforced.

Organisations should never push the child/young person into giving details of the abuse. Their role is to listen to what the child/young person wants to tell them and not to conduct an investigation. Any leading questions, any undue pressure exerted on the child, may prejudice any subsequent investigation, and indeed may make the child hesitant or unwilling to repeat their disclosure.

The first step must always be to protect the best interests of child - once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimisation.

Physical and/or sexual abuse of a child is a crime. Organisations must notify authorities when there are reasonable grounds for reporting abuse, and it is inappropriate for an organisation to investigate or to decide whether abuse has taken place or not. All concerns must be acted upon immediately by referral to the appropriate authorities.

Effective Reporting Process.

An effective reporting procedure strengthens the effort towards a Child Safe Organisation. Offenders are less likely to remain in an environment where workers are trained to report inappropriate behaviour, including breaches of the Code of Conduct or Professional Boundaries. Offenders thrive on secrecy and are more likely to commit an abusive act when they are in an environment in which other staff members are naïve, insensitive, and unresponsive to the possibility of child abuse.

Having clear reporting guidelines is an important part of maintaining an open and aware culture. A reporting procedure outlines how the organisation will manage complaints and/or allegations of misconduct against a staff member, volunteer, or service user. It helps convince participants that their concerns will be acted on appropriately and fairly. A reporting procedure ensures all complaints/concerns are managed in a uniform manner.

The child protection policy, rather than outline how an internal investigation should take place, should detail the management of complaints and reporting process. This should specify when staff are required to report the matter to external agencies: Child FIRST, Child Protection, or the Police. Any allegation that is a criminal offence must be reported to authorities.

Clear responsibilities for all staff members will help to clarify how internal reporting processes should function. A flow chart which lays out who is required to report, how to do so, when to do so, and who to make the report to should be a requirement of all organisations and institutions.

If someone has reasonable grounds to suspect that child abuse is taking place then they must report it.

3. Section 13 - Laws and Legal Processes.

13. Mandatory Reporting.

It is Child Wise's opinion that everybody who works with or comes into contact with children through their work should be mandated by law to report allegations or suspicions of abuse. This should include ministers of religion and the Catholic Confessional. Whilst recognising the challenges in this stance, there should not be two standards for the church and the laity. Priests should be required to advise their congregation that they have to report, and be given the support and training they need to uphold this standard.

There should be zero tolerance of child abuse in all organisations and institutions. If reporting of child abuse is not mandated by law, organisations should make it a requirement to compulsorily report child abuse. There is an ethical duty of care that all people who work with or come into contact with children must uphold. The Northern Territory laws around mandatory reporting are exemplary in this regard.

As discussed above, creating a culture of transparency, openness and accountability is critical in ensuring children are protected from abuse. By ensuring all professionals (including religious ministers and the confessional) are mandated to report, the barriers to an open culture of child abuse prevention can be greatly reduced.

13. Working With Children Checks.

Child Wise recognises the importance of conducting Working With Children Checks for all people who come into contact with children through their work, including ministers of religion.

Nevertheless, as many as 95% of child sex offenders do not have criminal convictions and best estimates stand at only 5-10% of offenders being prosecuted. There is still a lot of work to be done in regard to the prevention of child sexual abuse, and identification of potential perpetrators. The risks for employers is that offenders who are seeking access to children may have no traceable history through a Police or Working With Children Check, as they have never been caught or prosecuted.

Child Wise, in seeking to create Child Safe Organisations, has developed a best practice model for child safe recruitment and selection of staff as taught in the Choose With Care® model. Again, as outlined above, offenders will target vulnerable organisations. Promoting an organisation's child protection policy or Child Safe Organisation status in employment advertisements, backed up by a rigorous recruitment and screening process not solely reliant on police and Working With Children Checks will help to deter potential offenders.

Interviews should be conducted for all staff and recruited volunteer positions – with a preference for face-to-face interviews. Behavioural-based questions should be used to ask for examples of the candidate's past behaviour and experiences. Behavioural based questioning is proven to be the best way to predict future behaviour and identify any warning signs a candidate may offer.

In positions working directly working with children, the organisation should explore the candidate's motivations for working with children, which should include both behavioural and value-based questions seeking information about the candidate's attitudes to children, professional boundaries, accountability, team work and how they have responded to ethical dilemmas.

A minimum of two reference checks should be required for all preferred candidates. This would include short and long term positions, volunteers on placement, and consultants. The candidate's most recent employer/supervisor must be one of these referees. The organisation should verify the identity of the referee and make direct contact with each of these referees. Written references should not be accepted.

All staff, recruited volunteers and relevant contractors/consultants should be required to read and sign the organisation's Child Protection Code of Conduct and sanctions for breaching the Child Protection Code of Conduct should be outlined in all employment contracts or registration forms.

While useful as a deterrent, the Working With Children Check system may result in organisations becoming complacent in their recruitment and selection processes. Strong and robust child safe recruitment and selection will help to account for deficiencies in this system.

13. Potential New Laws.

Child Wise recommends that there should be mandatory Child Abuse Prevention Standards For Organisations and Institutions introduced within Victoria. These standards should stipulate the minimum standards required of all organisations, not only those who work directly with children, and should include:

- The requirement for a child protection policy which covers all areas outlined in Section 11, Part 2 of this submission.
- The requirement for all organisations who work with or come into contact with children to undergo regular training relevant to their work on how to Understand and Respond to Child Abuse as outlined in Section 16 of this submission.
- The creation of a monitoring and compliance body that will ensure organisations are meeting Child Abuse Prevention Standards for Organisations and Institutions, in the model of a 'Work Safe' approach.
- The requirement for stringent child safe recruitment and selection practices to reduce over-reliance on the Working With Children Check system.
- The extension of current laws which outlaw online grooming to cover instances of grooming in person.
- The creation of a confidential 'Concerning Person's Register'. Currently people may report concerns to Crime Stoppers, but there is no dedicated service to record suspicions of abuse. Child Protection and Police require these suspicions to be reported and recorded to build a picture of possible offenders.

3. Section 14 - Responding to Offenders and Alleged Offenders.

14. Responding to Offenders and Alleged Offenders.

There is a need for protecting staff who have had an allegation made against them until proven guilty, and having clear and formal processes to do so, in order to create an open culture. If staff feel they will be mistreated or falsely accused they will be unwilling to report abuse. If they feel confident in the processes they will be more likely to report.

Managing suspected cases of abuse and responding to alleged offenders is covered in sections 11 and 16 of this submission as they form part of the broader policy and prevention process. However, the below aspects outline the key ways incidents can be managed.

- Clear policies and procedures so if they are breached there is a course of action can be put in place and that person be monitored – to protect staff and victims,
- Safe recruitment and selection of staff,
- Options for counselling with professionals that clearly specialise with offending behaviours,
- Having a good working knowledge of the dynamics of sex offenders,
- Organisations being Child Safe in policies, procedures, codes of conduct, professional boundaries, managing complaints,
- Confidentiality at all times,
- Clear complaints management for staff, volunteers, parents and children,
- Making sure opportunities to be alone with children are not available,
- Police and working with children checks,
- All staff trained in child safe practices.

Policies on responding to and handling complaints do not have to be exactly the same: if there is difference in cases there should be difference in handling them. But they need to be clear and obvious. If someone is suspected of abuse but not enough evidence or it is unproven, greater monitoring and stronger procedures may be required.

3. Section 15 - Data, Privacy and Public Interest.

15. Data, Privacy and Public Interest.

There is a need to link risk management, reporting processes, and data management together within an organisation.

An organisation must take reasonable steps to protect any incident reports it holds from misuse and loss and unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

An organisation must take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify information if it is no longer needed for any purpose for which the information may be used or disclosed.

An organisation must set out in a document clearly expressed policies on its management of incident reports. The organisation must make the document available to anyone who asks for it.

3. Section 16 - Prevention.

16 Prevention.

Child Wise recognises that there are two categories of risk factors for child abuse within organisations: constitutive structures, and normative cultures.

The organisational structure contains the constitutive, or structural, elements of an organisation. Some of these may include: hierarchical status systems, no formal procedures for hiring or screening staff, activities which have technical/task demands that require touching.

The structural elements of an organisation, if not geared towards child abuse prevention, may render the organisation vulnerable to the predations of sex offenders. For instance, the lack of formal procedures for hiring or screening of staff is a structural element that makes organisations more attractive to potential offenders. Yet these elements can be managed, altered, or accounted for within the framework of training, policies & procedures, and auditing & certification processes. New procedures can be enforced around the hiring of staff, procedures can be put in place to address what is, and what is not, appropriate touching.

The normative culture of an organisation encompasses the values and attitudes that exist within the organisation. It is a culture that will be based in staff and volunteer behaviour and attitudes. Elements of an organisational culture may be: autocratic authority systems, hostility to change, or overwhelming loyalty to existing practices.

The normative organisational culture of an organisation can magnify the vulnerabilities of the organisation's structural elements. For example, if a hierarchical status system is reinforced by an autocratic authority system, it becomes difficult to facilitate change. Within religious organisations for instance, the often unquestioned power of ministers can create a culture of both secrecy and acceptance. It is the normative culture of an organisation that can set up internal barriers to changing the organisational structure, and inhibit effective child abuse prevention.

The most common gaps or failings that prevent child safe environments are:

- Inadequate: many policies simply do not cover the key elements of child abuse prevention: e.g. 'best interests of the child' principle. Often they may be fragmented: some or all key aspects are covered but they are not collected in the one place.
- Complacency: there is little to no awareness of the risks of child abuse within the organisation. Frequently it is assumed if a person does not work with a child directly, or if they are supervised, there is no risk.
- Inadequate Codes of Conduct: a Code of Conduct can guide staff and management behaviour, and act as a touchstone for a child safe environment. Often they are poorly documented or maintained.
- Professional Boundaries: many staff do not understand of professional boundaries, and how to respond to breaches.
- No ownership: the policy is in place, but there is no designated person who ensures it is applied, followed, effective, or updated.
- Outdated: the policy does not have current legislation or industry standards.
- Risk Management: the failure to conduct a risk assessment for all activities having contact with children can lead to gaps in protection policies and procedures. They must be conducted, documented clearly, and responded to.
- Recruitment: inadequate or inappropriate recruitment and screening procedures are in place.
- Complaints: managing of complaints or allegations is not covered or is not done so effectively, with a lack of confidentiality and data management.
- Inaccessible: the policy exists, but is not used. Staff don't sight it, there is no induction process, or it is too complex and unwieldy for practical use. Children, young people, and parents/caregivers should have access to the policy to improve transparency. Frequently the language of the policy can be inaccessible and difficult for frontline staff to understand.
- Continuous Improvement: an absence of processes and continuous improvement programs, or a failure to implement results of reviews, often means policies and procedures become stale and lack relevance to current activities and staff.
- Training: there is no provision for training, or staff have inadequate knowledge of child abuse (i.e. what to look for, how to recruit, how to respond to disclosures).

There are then two broad elements to effectively implementing child abuse prevention and addressing the above gaps: prevention measures, which focus on training, awareness raising, etc; and case management measures, which include policies and procedures, and ensuring their implementation. Preventative measures will help to instil a culture that acts to protect children from the risk of abuse. Case management measures will help to establish external and internal barriers to sex offenders. The delivery method of these measures must be tailored to the structures of the organisation, and the culture that is extant.

A key learning that can be taken from the British efforts to prevent child abuse in sport is the creation of a National Database to record and track all child abuse referrals. For child abuse prevention in Victorian organisations, the benefits of such a database would be tremendous. Effectively and confidentially managed, it would identify organisations which have higher incidences of referral and maintain accurate data on the nature and frequency of incidents. In turn, this will enable the Government and Institutional bodies to target resources in child abuse prevention more efficiently, at the organisations that are found to be most at risk, and provide for more effective interventions with individual organisations.

A database of this nature will help ensure that organisations and institutions cannot hide offenders by moving them around. It will also ensure that individuals suspected but not convicted of child abuse offences cannot move from organisation to organisation.

There are many organisations which feel that their work does not require a child protection policy and surrounding procedures. In some cases this may apply, however the standard should be that policy & procedures must apply to all organisations & staff, not only where they work directly with children, but where the organisation's work may impact directly *or indirectly* on children.

Overcoming Barriers.

Typically, staff or volunteers in an organisation may raise objections to child abuse prevention measures based on fear, denial, lack of resources, complacency, or an entrenched culture that is hostile to reporting of abuse.

Child Wise has found that a combination of targeting training, information sessions, and awareness raising materials can change people's attitudes within an organisation to child abuse prevention. If the problem is understood to be manageable, and people acknowledge that child abuse can and does occur, and are provided with the tools and knowledge in how to recognise and respond to child abuse, they will become more willing to prevent it.

Ultimately, the most effective way to build Child Safe Organisations, and to change organisational structures and cultures, is to empower the staff and volunteers with the knowledge and understanding of how to prevent and respond to child abuse.

Choose With Care®

The Choose With Care® program is an innovative and award-winning prevention program that works to minimise the risk of child abuse within organisations working with children. As the winner of the National Child Protection Award in 2005, this training program is unique in Australia and one of the few in the world promoting a systematic approach to child abuse prevention.

Choose with Care® is a proactive, preventative, and participatory model that builds awareness and resilience in professionals charged with the care of children in such diverse areas as schools, residential care, foster care, recruitment, sporting and leisure organisations, volunteer programs, mentoring programs, government, social services, and child care. While there is no fool-proof methodology, Choose with Care® is a risk management approach, which if applied thoroughly, will reduce and minimise incidents or the risk of child abuse within an organisation.

Choose with Care®'s holistic approach to child protection works to create child safe and respectful environments where opportunities for abuse are eliminated. The training program is based on general content and principles that are tailored to different organisations and industries. It has been delivered to schools, community sporting groups, disability services, government departments, psychologists, state and national based charity groups, private sector businesses, and international aid groups.

The training framework for Child Safe Organisations addresses the following topics:

- Understanding Abuse
- Managing Risk to Minimise Abuse
- Developing a Child Protection Policy
- Creating Clear Boundaries
- Recruitment, Screening, and Selection
- Staff Support and Supervision
- Managing Complaints
- Training & Information
- Empower, Involve, and Listen to Children
- Dynamics of Sex Offending
- Grooming & Targeting Behaviours
- Developing Fair and Effective Reporting Processes
- Sexual Behaviour of Children (normal sexual behaviour and concerning behaviours)

Choose with Care® program was acknowledged by DHS as the key source in developing its' 'National Framework – Creating Child Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers (2005)'. This framework was subsequently endorsed unanimously by every Community Service Minister in Australia. Several state governments have consulted Child Wise to assist in their 'National Framework' implementation strategies.

4. Child Abuse Prevention Model

Child Wise offers a tailored approach to assist organisations to become 'child safe' based on Child Wise's Child Abuse Prevention Model.

The range of services that Child Wise offers have been developed through twenty years of experience training organisations and assisting them to become child safe. They include:

- Organisational needs assessment of the roles and functions at all levels,
- Interviews and analysis of existing structures and cultures,
- Understanding barriers and how to overcome them,
- Development and implementation of Child Protection Policies & Procedures,
- Development of tailored training packages for all levels of staff,
- Systems administration and compliance,
- Evaluation tools and risk management,
- 'Child Safe Organisation ' Auditing & Certification.

The following page is a summary of Child Wise's Child Abuse Prevention Model. It should be considered along with the '12 Steps to a Child Safe Organisation' document attached to this submission, and the Choose With Care® manual.



Step 1

Organisational needs assessment.

The Child Abuse Prevention Model is tailored to an organisation following a needs assessment: interviews and analysis of existing structures. Child Wise has extensive experience at developing a culture of child abuse prevention within an organisation, and recognises the need for an individualised approach to create organisational change.

Step 2

Tailored Child Abuse Prevention Training for: CEO's, Board Members, Managers, HR, and other administration staff.

Tailored training to understand, identify, and organisationally respond to child abuse and neglect provided to administration departments which will build Child Safe Organisations through a whole of organisation approach.

Step 3

Review and development of Child Protection Policies & Procedures.

Child Wise will review, develop, or revise an organisation's Child Protection Policy & Procedures.

Child Wise works with the organisation to implement the Child Protection Policy & Procedures.

Step 4

Rollout of Child Protection Policies & Procedures and designation of Child Safety Officer.

The organisation should designate a Child Safety Officer. They can act as conduits for training, information materials and to ensure compliance. Larger organisations may choose to create a Child Safe Working Group.

The rollout aims to engender organisational flow through: a consistent approach is the best way to embed a culture of child abuse prevention in an organisation.

Tailored training for staff on Understanding and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect based on organisational needs.

Training will be tailored to individual organisations and it will be based on the activities and structure of each organisation.

Step 5

Child Safe Organisation Certification.

Child Wise offers Child Safe Organisation Certification status, through an audit process that includes self-assessments and site visits. The organisational policies, procedures, and practices are examined and assessed in line with international best practice.

Child Wise would like to thank the Commission for the invitation to make a submission on our best approach to creating Child Safe Organisations.

Organisations have a moral and legal responsibility
to ensure children are safe in their care.
Child abuse is preventable.



Child Wise
PO Box 451
South Melbourne, Vic, 3205
(+61) 3 9645 8911

office@childwise.net
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twitter.com/Child_Wise

