

Victoria Protective Behaviours Training Proposal by NAPCAN

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Via email

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Dear Premier Allan, Minister Blandthorn, and Minister Hutchins,

My name is Leesa Waters, I am the CEO of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. At NAPCAN we were deeply saddened to hear about the recent cases of child sexual abuse occurring within Victorian childcare settings. I would firstly like to extend my heartfelt sympathies to the entire Victorian community affected by these crimes.

I am reaching out because I believe that a collaboration with NAPCAN could be of some help during this time. In 2024 the Queensland government was faced with a similar crisis when it was revealed that Ashley Paul Griffiths had committed over 1,623 sexual offences on children. In response, the Queensland government engaged NAPCAN to adapt and deliver our Protective Behaviours training package to Early Childhood Educators across Queensland. This is a program aimed at equipping staff with the skills to identify and respond to grooming and abusive behaviours by other adults. We also incorporate information and skills from our Child Safe Organisations training package into this program. We know from experience that the biggest vulnerability for young children in childcare settings is a lack of knowledge from the staff about how to identify and address grooming behaviour, and that the best prevention strategy is to upskill and educate those staff to create a culture where children's safety is prioritised.

The Protective Behaviours package is already developed and our staff are already trained to deliver it. We are a fast moving organisation, and so if we were granted the funding we could open up registrations for this program in Victoria within a week, and begin delivering training sessions almost immediately afterwards. We have numerous learnings from Queensland that would translate to Victoria, i.e. times to schedule training, length of training, data regarding the most valuable learnings, etc. We imagine that this could be a valuable announceable for you to respond quickly to this crisis. We will be able to quickly inform the early childhood sector of this opportunity, since as a national organisation we already have an existing footprint in Victoria via our other training programs, and by far the largest group of subscribers to our mailing lists are from the early childhood sector.

The Queensland Protective Behaviours program has been highly successful. In the 12 months that it has been running, we have trained more than 1000 workers across Queensland both in person and online, with 98.22% of participants reporting an increase in awareness and confidence in identifying and responding to abuse or grooming. The Queensland government invited NAPCAN to submit a phase 2 proposal. I can provide contact details regarding the contract managers who stated "the program has been an incredible success".

NAPCAN is aware of proposed reforms to include similar types of training in Victoria as part of the Working With Children Check requirements. While NAPCAN supports these proposals, we do not see it as conflicting with our suggestion. The Working With Children Check reforms will not be targeting the early childhood sector specifically and will take substantial time to develop. We have heard through our networks that the community is highly concerned by these revelations and they want both decisive action by government and the opportunity to be involved in the solution.

I am also available if you would like to discuss this opportunity further. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you or your relevant staff about progressing this proposed course of action. If you would like more detail about the Protective Behaviours program, I have attached our initial grant application to the Queensland government, which details the specifics of how the program operates, and our subsequent phase 2 extension request, which includes key data about the effectiveness of the program.

Kind regards,

Leesa Waters
CEO
NAPCAN

