

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations

Melbourne — 4 April 2013

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Emeritus Professor F. Briggs, University of South Australia.

The CHAIR — On behalf of the committee, I welcome Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs from the University of South Australia. All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript. Please note that these proceedings are not being broadcast. Following your presentation to us this afternoon, committee members will ask questions relating to both your submission and the evidence you will provide to us. Thank you again for being before us. We appreciate it, and we look forward to hearing from you. Please commence when you are ready.

Prof. BRIGGS — First of all what I want to emphasise is that unless we do something about educating people to deal with child sex abuse cases, especially professionals who work in this area, in all human services in fact, I think there will be another inquiry in another 10 years time, because what we are seeing is ignorance and also a reluctance to accept that this is a problem — ‘It does not involve me, and therefore I am not interested’. This is especially the case in universities.

About seven years ago, I was fortunate to be offered \$10 million by John Howard to set up a child protection multi-professional research centre, the aim of which was not only to do research but to be able to introduce child protection issues to all the human services courses around Australian universities. There is not a single person in that research centre and never has been who has any expertise in child sex abuse. With the current publicity, I made inquiries to see if they have any plans for doing any research in this area, and they said they could not because they had nobody who had the expertise. If that is the situation in a child protection centre, it is an indicator of negligence within universities.

Twenty years ago, I was offering a whole semester’s course on all aspects of child protection — multi-professional. Now my students get one 50-minute lecture on child sex abuse, so how on earth can they operate successfully without making mistakes? This involves social work students as well. There is no wonder that mistakes are being made and that there are misunderstandings. You need people who can understand children, have a knowledge of child development and a good sound knowledge of not just child abuse but how child sex offenders operate. That is really missing. It is included in my book — my latest book that is — and I have left the chapters here for you to look at.

The other thing you asked me to talk about was a child protection curriculum. I have brought two examples from South Australia. As a result of the inquiry that we had a few years ago, it was decided to get rid of the old protective behaviours program that started in Victoria, I might add with my assistance in 1984. It was not any good, so it was replaced with developmentally appropriate modules for each age group. Unfortunately I cannot leave these with you because I am actually working with them, and they would not give me any spares.

New Zealand has an even better one. In my estimation, New Zealand’s has been evaluated with children over and over and modified. To the best of my knowledge the South Australian one has not yet been evaluated with children. They went the other way around and printed it first, and they are going to evaluate it later. It is not being taught. It is not being taught as it should be. Parents are thinking their children are being protected and they are not because the teachers do not feel sufficiently confident. They do not have sufficient knowledge. They are dreading that using this might result in disclosures of abuse. There is another deficit. We have got the program, but unless it is used and used well it is a waste of money, really.

You do need a child protection curriculum, and it needs to be taught conscientiously. I wonder if it would not be better to have schools employing somebody as a specialist to teach it. New South Wales went down that track, and for the very same reason: because teachers were missing out the important material — the sensitive material. They talk about being safe on the road or things that are easy to talk about, but when it came to being able to say no to adults, being able to identify inappropriate behaviour and how to report it, there were missing that out. It has happened everywhere.

Child protection policies you asked me to address as well. I have left a pile of samples. I think every establishment that involves children should have a child protection policy, but of course it is no good just having it and putting it in a cupboard; it has to be used. I think there should be one in every school, and not only should new teachers have to read it and agree to it, but visitors should too, and that would include student teachers. It would include students on work experience and that sort of thing. In designing it, it is a good idea to have

parents involved. You cannot of course always have all parents involved, but at least parents need to know what is happening. It must be used once you have it.

A child protection policy must indicate behaviours that are unacceptable, that would place the teacher at risk or that would place the child at risk, such as being alone with a child in a room or in a storeroom and banning teachers from contacting children socially, especially using email and social networks. That must be banned. All those sorts of behaviours — not taking children in cars without being accompanied. What you usually find is that child sex offenders in schools will get the trust of everybody. They will get to know the parents of the targeted children. They will offer their services for a wide range of things, so they get the reputation of being the best teacher in the school. They will do the extra playground duty. They will be volunteering for sports. They will be volunteering for camps — anything that will give them contact with the child with no other supervisor there.

What I found is that, without mentioning names, some church schools and churches have learnt nothing from the past, and I am talking about as recently as this year and last year. For example, I was helping boys from a church school in Western Australia just before Christmas, and they were eventually awarded something like \$380 000 each because the school had been notified over a 10-year period what this teacher was doing, and they still had not reported it. When it is exposed eventually, the school usually protects the teacher, and this is still happening. Even when he was convicted he was still being supported by the school, and the children were not. I discovered that they had no child protection policy and no child protection curriculum, just the same as in previous schools that had exactly the same problems. Of course without a child protection curriculum the kids do not know what is reportable behaviour or how to report it, because usually parents have not gone down that track. Parents do not know what to say to children. Even when he was convicted — the latest one — he was still supported by the school, and the children were demonised. He appealed and won the appeal temporarily but then was charged again and reconvicted and only at that point did the boys get any assistance. But when it came to compensation, they were told they did not need it, because they were still in school and they were doing all right.

It was the fact that I wrote a report showing all the research as to how this can have long-term effects and what the effects are, particularly with boys, because the sexual abuse of boys has been grossly neglected. Boys, I think, from my experience, suffer more than girls because their sexuality is an issue when they have been sexually abused by a male. They are made to feel guilty if their bodies respond to sexual touching, and it is very easy to make them feel guilty — and the same, by the way, when it comes to the church with priests. They use the same strategies. I do not know whether any of you have seen the latest documentary, the *Mea Maxima Culpa* one. The pattern of behaviour that is shown there — it is in America — is exactly the same as I have experienced here. The boy is blamed and he has to ask the priest for forgiveness for his sins. In other words, the priest is putting the blame on to the child.

Whilst I am on that subject and before I wonder off again, the other thing I found in my research was exactly as you saw in that documentary, that is, where young children were sexually abused by children over the age of 12, plus the priests or the monks, the brothers. When they got to age 12 they then had to abuse the younger children for the amusement of the adults. What they were doing was creating the next generation of sex offenders. Then I found that they were recruited as priests and brothers. By the age of 18 they had not come across girls and their only sexual experience — and your first sexual experience is the most important one — was with younger children and so this continued. It is no surprise then that the Christian Brothers in particular, who had come through the system and the priests who had come through the same system, were sex offenders as well.

The research from America shows that abuse by clergy is the most damaging because it involves not only the child taking on the guilt for the priest but it also involves spiritual abuse because they usually bring God into it — ‘God chose you to do this for me’; so there is the damage there. It has been found that abuse by a priest is more damaging than abuse by your own parents, and that is pretty serious.

What was the other thing you asked me to do? There was something else. Have you got the list?

The CHAIR — I have not got the list but we are very happy to go to questions if that would help you, Professor Briggs.

Prof. BRIGGS — One thing I would like to mention, and it is about a risk with the churches again, is, as I said, that they have not learnt much from past experience. They still regard child sex abuse as akin to a road traffic offence in that they think that getting the abuser back into the church, forgiving him or her, but usually a him, alone will support him and stop him from abusing again. What I have found is that the churches are reintegrating convicted child sex offenders. This is in both the Anglican and the Catholic church. They call it ‘reintegrating’.

The rationale they have given me, which I opposed vociferously, was that they have the right to God’s blessing and they hope that bringing them back into the church would enable them to overcome — without any treatment necessarily — their problems. The problem there, in one diocese that I am very familiar with, is that they just ask them to sign a form promising that they will not reoffend. Convicted child sex offenders, and I have interviewed many — I interviewed 85 — said that if a sex offender really wants to change he is not going to go anywhere near children or the place where he offended. Yet we have had Anglican clergy who have gone back into the church as choristers in choirs in which there were children and getting involved in youth groups. You find that church people may be a bit naive, but they are not allowed to know the history of these people because of their rights to privacy, and of course they are bighearted and welcome volunteers. It worries me that this is being done with a degree of naiveté. It is about forgiveness as a cure, and it does not.

Child sex offending is habitual behaviour. It means that they are sexually attracted to children and you cannot stop that just by bringing them back into church. But the thing that really upset me was that they were doing nothing at all to reintegrate the victims and the families of victims. This caused annoyance, because they were perceived then as favouring the offenders, protecting the offenders and neglecting the victims.

The CHAIR — I can inform you that I have been told that you have covered off most of what we have asked of you in your presentation just now. Thank you very much.

I would like to go to that point you raised about the child protection policy: that it needs to be used and it should be implemented extensively. This inquiry is looking not only at religious organisations but also other organisations and I note that in the work you have done you wrote protocols and procedures for Rotary International.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

The CHAIR — I am led to believe that they are not being monitored.

Prof. BRIGGS — That is true.

The CHAIR — Can you elaborate a little bit further on why they are not being monitored and if they are not, what should be done so that guidance can be given to organisations like Rotary that have a lot of dealings with children?

Prof. BRIGGS — Some Rotary districts have taken this responsibility very seriously; others have been flippant. I am an honorary Rotarian in New Zealand, and they have been flippant. In fact they have a convicted sex offender still in a club that takes in students, even though I pointed out that the wording does not say that you have to be a child sex offender, it just says ‘sex offender’. They were worried that the perpetrator was a lawyer and he was threatening that he would take them to court if they excommunicated him. That is one reason why. When it was reported to Rotary International they said they would send an auditor, but they did not.

The clubs I have been associated with in South Australia take their responsibilities seriously. One of the important things is that they have a child protection officer in each district who is not just a member of a Rotary club but somebody who has expertise in this area. One of your problems for Rotary is that the officers change position every year, and when students were coming back who had had awful experiences, the current mob were not really interested because they did not send them off there in the first place. That was how I came to get into this; I was asked to help.

The CHAIR — You said the child protection policy that should apply to all organisations that are dealing with children needs to be well designed.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

The CHAIR — Is there a model, in your view and from your experience, possibly apart from the one you have contributed to, that really would go across all organisations and that could be applied?

Prof. BRIGGS — I do not think so, because each organisation has different issues. I think there is a pattern of what needs to be incorporated. The church ones, where there are any, tend to be much too long, much too wordy and full of rhetoric. They do not get into the nitty-gritty, which refers to unwanted and unacceptable behaviour. That is the pattern with the church ones I have seen.

The CHAIR — In your view does any church have a better designed model?

Prof. BRIGGS — I have not seen one.

The CHAIR — You have not seen one?

Prof. BRIGGS — No.

Mrs COOTE — Professor Briggs, thank you very much indeed. I must say your supporting material was really interesting. I would like to ask you about the Anglican Church in particular. We know that Peter Hollingworth chose to stand down as Governor-General because of his treatment of sexual abuse within the Anglican Church. It is our understanding that in fact the church put in procedures that addressed a lot of the issues and that they feel fairly confident, certainly in comparison with Towards Healing and the Melbourne Response, that their procedures are very good and are relevant to today and that things such as mandatory reporting perhaps are not relevant to them particularly. Could you comment on that?

Prof. BRIGGS — I have not seen everything they have. I have a meeting with the archbishop in about three weeks time. They certainly involved me in other things, and I was pretty critical because, as I said, with most of them it is lots of jargon and not as much nitty-gritty as there should be. Certainly Archbishop Aspinall made a difference. He changed this procedure. He writes and apologises immediately to anybody who reports abuse of any kind, which did not happen under the previous reign. What you find is that the church insurer's lawyers dictate what they do. Certainly Peter Hollingworth was being told by the lawyers of the insurers that he could not apologise. Apologies mean guilt; that was the argument. Phillip Aspinall immediately changed that. He now insists that reports are made straight to police — a process which was not there before. But I have not seen any child protection policy. Maybe I will in a couple of weeks time.

Mrs COOTE — Is your feeling, because you are in the field and because of the information you are gathering, that the Anglican Church is actually doing it better and addressing these issues better than the Catholic Church?

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — So they are further ahead. They are one of the better ones, the Anglican Church?

Prof. BRIGGS — The Anglican Church does different things in each diocese. They certainly consulted me and sent me the drafts of the documents for the reintegration of convicted offenders and changed that dramatically.

Mrs COOTE — What did they actually do with the reintegration of offenders?

Prof. BRIGGS — What were they going to do?

Mrs COOTE — What are they doing?

Prof. BRIGGS — At the moment the offender who wants to re-enter the church, but not as a priest, is able to sign a form which says that he will not reoffend. He can join another church community, and I think the rector is informed of the history, but of course other people are not. Church people are forgiving as well. I have encountered situations where people say, 'Maybe he only slipped up once. He deserves the benefit of the doubt', and he is brought back into the fold where there are children.

Mrs COOTE — So you feel that there needs to be something stronger there in the reintegration of people back into the church?

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — Thank you very much indeed.

Ms HALFPENNY — Just a quick question on what you were saying about the insurance companies making the decisions for churches. How do you know that?

Prof. BRIGGS — I saw the documentation, and of course when I was doing the inquiry into the Brisbane diocese that came through loud and clear. I saw the correspondence.

Ms HALFPENNY — You also said that Phillip Aspinall changed that. Was he able to negotiate or did he just not listen to them anymore?

Prof. BRIGGS — I am not sure, but certainly he starts off with an apology and says it should not happen. He offers counselling, which was not offered before. Basically the lawyers were banning Christian involvement.

Ms HALFPENNY — Thank you. Just in terms of teaching children within organisations, what do you think the government could do to prevent abuse? Often we talk about what should happen to offenders and legal or criminal sanctions once it has happened, but in terms of actually preventing abuse, have you got some particular things that you think the government could do either through legislation or funding policies?

Prof. BRIGGS — Absolutely. You need a statewide — or preferably a national — child protection curriculum along the lines of what is in South Australia and New Zealand. New South Wales has had one since 1985 as well. It must be taught in the universities. The teachers must know not just about how to recognise child abuse but how to recognise child abusers, because they fall for it. For the last couple of weeks I have been in New South Wales. I was invited up there by federal and state politicians who are just sick to death of constituents coming to them with stories about child abuse and especially incest, and the fact that sex offenders are choosing younger and younger children, because the criminal justice system has not got an answer there. If a child is young or disabled, there is no prosecution; they get away with it.

I am going off track a bit here. If the offender is mother's boyfriend or the child's father, the protective parent has a dilemma, because what is happening is that the state services are not investigating allegations thoroughly. If there is a case going to the Family Court or in the Family Court, they often do not investigate at all, because the child is with the protective parent, and therefore the child is safe. So they are leaving the decision to the Family Court. The Family Court is not set up to investigate anything in the way of criminal behaviour. If it goes to the Family Court and it has not been substantiated, it is very easy for the offender to say that the mother has trained the child to tell lies — 'Look, it has not been substantiated' — or that the mother is mad. We are finding even the Family Court statistics show that about a third of mothers who lost their children had been labelled as being mentally ill. By whom? Not by psychiatrists. It is so easy to label a protective parent as being the bad one, and then the child is handed over to the perpetrator.

The New South Wales politicians were so sick of hearing about this that they asked me to go and see them and talk to the people involved. A lot of politicians think that state services are not allowed to investigate cases, that police are not allowed or that your social workers are not allowed to investigate if the case is in the Family Court or there is a Family Court order, and that is nonsense.

Even in South Australia the former CEO said to me, 'We can only go in if it is a life and death situation'. This was a little child who was the carer of a man with AIDS who had got two convictions for child sex abuse and convictions for violence, and the Family Court had removed her from the mother, who was a perfectly good mum, and handed her to him. I said I thought it was a potentially fatal situation leaving a small child to be the carer of a dying man, but our CEO did not think so. I find this is a national problem not just a state problem.

I was asked to address politicians in Parliament House, and we had a meeting afterwards. Their suggestion is —

Ms HALFPENNY — Was this in terms of organisations or — —

Prof. BRIGGS — New South Wales. Yes. What you need is what they call a gateway, not go to your social services which are overwhelmed, but report to police. and the police then refers the child sex abuse case to a gateway. That gateway would have a child psychologist and a paediatrician who is a specialist in this area, and

they would investigate thoroughly whether this child is being abused or not. Then if there was a prosecution possible, it would go with police or it would go to the Family Court. They think that would reduce the number of cases going to the Family Court and probably assist police as well. My question is: are there enough experienced child psychologists and paediatricians who would be willing to concentrate in this very difficult area?

Ms HALFPENNY — Thank you.

Mr O'BRIEN — Thank you very much for your evidence, Professor, and for the wide-ranging research that you have brought into our inquiry from across at least Australia. There is one thing I am going to ask you further about. You mentioned the 1993–94 Briggs, Hawkins and Williams research — —

Prof. BRIGGS — Research, yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — Am I correct in saying that is the foundation for the statements on page 5 of your paper in relation to the Christian Brothers situation in Western Australia?

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — We would obviously appreciate receiving — and I found it online, the research link to it — the actual source material of those statements. They are very strong, particularly where you say:

... we learned that brothers and priests recruited victims for the brotherhood and priesthood, thus ensuring that child abuse became inter-generational.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — There are also references to bestiality. How documented were those sources — interviews et cetera?

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes; we did. We documented them, and the material went to the Australian Institute of Criminology, because they funded the research.

Mr O'BRIEN — Okay. And did you then get a response from the Christian Brothers organisation as to whether they accepted those allegations —

Prof. BRIGGS — No.

Mr O'BRIEN — let alone then how they would respond to make sure that they would not happen again?

Prof. BRIGGS — No.

Mr O'BRIEN — All right. Have you had anything to do — —

Prof. BRIGGS — No, because those schools have closed down.

Mr O'BRIEN — The individual schools had closed down.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — But did they still find a need to respond, because the organisation still exists.

Prof. BRIGGS — No, there was no response. There was a response from the Catholic Church.

Mr O'BRIEN — Okay. Could you detail that response?

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes. It was in the *Australian* newspaper. More than half of the boys who were sexually abused — this was a sample of 200 — between the ages of 11 and 15 had been sexually abused by clergy or brothers — religious persons.

Incidentally American research shows that if you look at the characteristics of a child sex offender, the second characteristic after being mainly male is that they are religious; they belong to religious organisations. That is associated with authoritarianism and the tradition of owning your wife or your children.

The press officer for the Catholic Church went on air saying that we had only interviewed Catholics — which was rubbish; they were only about 20 per cent Catholic — and that he had re-interviewed all our subjects, which was physically impossible, and that our research methods were shonky. Of course our research methods had to be approved by not only the University of South Australia but three corrections departments: West Australia, New South Wales and South Australia, and it only had about 2 hours in which to provide that response.

Mr O'BRIEN — All right. But you never received a direct response from the Christian Brothers?

Prof. BRIGGS — No. But bear in mind that those institutions were closed. They were the residential schools that featured in that film *Oranges and Sunshine*.

Mr O'BRIEN — It may be helpful for our work and for the work of others if you were to provide as much of the core material that you can get access to or otherwise enlighten the committee as to how we can get access to it.

Prof. BRIGGS — Given that this was 1993, the raw data will have gone by now.

Mr O'BRIEN — Whatever you can provide us with. Obviously the allegations are very strong and they seem to suggest a systemic problem in relation to the intergenerational aspect.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes. There was also a chapter in a book I wrote with the prisoners. What happened was that at about this time SBS did a program related to the treatment of child sex offenders. We are talking about 1993, when treatment was comparatively new. There were prisoners in Cooma who were so concerned about the ease with which they were able to sexually abuse boys that they went on camera to talk about this without being shadowed. I was invited to go to Cooma at about the same time.

After this program they said that all the commercial television programs wanted to interview them and they asked me if they should do it. I said, 'No way, because they will just sensationalise it, whereas the SBS program was a serious one'. With tongue in cheek I said, 'If you want to get your story out, you need to write it'. I do not think these fellows had ever written anything more than a dole cheque, but to my amazement within the first month I got a chapter which showed how they had made the transition from being victims to victimisers.

You start out thinking, 'You poor little thing; you didn't stand a chance', and then when he makes the transition, you hate him for it. I showed it to my publisher and she in turn showed it to her committee and said, 'If you can get more of this quality, we'll publish it', and they did. It is a book called *From Victim to Offender*. I am pretty sure there is a chapter in that book that includes the material you are talking about.

Mr O'BRIEN — That book or details of how we could get access to it would be great. We would be grateful for your assistance.

The CHAIR — Could you elaborate a little bit on how somebody goes from being offended against to being an offender?

Prof. BRIGGS — Learnt behaviour. As I said, we started out researching men. This came about because I used to take students to the women's jail and we found that most of the women were in there for drug-related offences and that most of them had been abused in every possible way in childhood. Drugs were introduced when they got to secondary school and they took them to block out their previous experiences. One of my students said, 'I wonder if we'd find the same thing if we went into the men's jail?'. I never expected that we would be accepted, but we were welcomed with open arms. We found that the men in jail had been sexually abused by an average of 14.5 different people. When you asked them if they had been sexually abused in childhood, they said, 'No way'. But I had learnt before that it is not acceptable for a man to admit that he has been a victim, which is why with the Mulligan report found that that most males cannot disclose that they were abused until they are adults and secure in their sexuality and secure in their support. Out of the couple of hundred we interviewed — that was the 200 people who had been sexually abused — only 26 had attempted to report one offender and only 1 out of 200 had successfully reported it and been believed. The others who tried

were punished, especially if they tried to report the priest to Grandma; ‘God would cut your tongue out’, that sort of thing ‘for making up such terrible stories’.

We found that those who were in jail had been abused by 14.5 different people and the difference between those who had not been jailed was really the volume of abuse. They had only had one or two experiences compared with the others. They had to accept this because they could not escape from it, so it became a way of life. Some of them would say they realised at one level that it was wrong but nobody protected them when they were kids. Very often they had been abused by people in authority so how could you take it seriously, and they were quite surprised when they were jailed.

The CHAIR — Do you think that would apply to the clergy if they were being trained in the seminary in the same — —

Prof. BRIGGS — Sorry, it is echoing.

The CHAIR — You were talking about talking to offenders in jail.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

The CHAIR — And you had discovered that they had been victims of sexual offenders. Do you think that a similar institutional practice may have applied to clergy training in seminaries? Would you have a view on that?

Prof. BRIGGS — Sorry, what exactly do you mean?

The CHAIR — Do you think that would apply to the clergy in terms of their — —

Prof. BRIGGS — That they had been brought up in that way?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Prof. BRIGGS — I would think so. But if the first question was, ‘Were you sexually abused in childhood?’, the answer would be, ‘No’, so you need to ask, ‘How old were you when you had your first sexual experience?’, because it is okay for boys to have a sexual experience; it is not okay to be abused. They would then tell you that maybe they were six or seven. I think I have given you the figures of the age at which sex offenders start offending; I think it is something like 30 per cent before the age of 10.

These children can be spotted in schools, but they are not being handled well; they are just treated as being naughty. If he gets caught again, he might be suspended. If he is caught three times, he will be expelled but then he goes to another school and because of his right to privacy the staff do not know if he has this history and it all starts again. However, by this time he is wary and goes where he is not going to be seen and takes better care not to be caught, and so it continues. I hear about this sort of thing on a regular basis. Children are getting younger and younger with sex offending — the youngest I have come across was age 4 — and they have either been sexually abused or been exposed to so much child pornography or pornography in general that they are so emotionally disturbed that they are acting it out.

Mr O’BRIEN — Regarding an additional bit of research, we have received evidence in relation to a number of proven perpetrators that part of their modus operandi was to introduce young children to alcohol, tobacco and other taboos as part of the grooming and that a number of those children have ended up developing alcohol problems both from the early introduction and also, probably more seriously, from dealing with the abuse. One other point is that a lot of them end up being serious criminals in other ways and in other fields, not just sexual abuse. Has any research been done on the level of alcohol or drug-related damage that has been inflicted upon victims as part of the abuse process — in other words, as part of the grooming, the hiding or the masking?

Prof. BRIGGS — To start out with, priests do not need to use grooming, because they have the authority. Like fathers or parents who sexually abuse their children, they do not need to groom, because they have the authority, but other teachers and other perpetrators do. What they use is pornography, first of all to capture boys’ sexual curiosity, and this is why with a child protection program children need to be warned that, if somebody shows you rude pictures, you get away quickly and tell your mum. They do it to normalise deviant sex. They show boys homosexual pornography and try to convince them that sex with boys and men is much

better than sex with girls. Of course they give them drugs and alcohol to knock them out, and they give them cigarettes.

The way that this is used, initially in programs that expect children to feel unsafe, and they rely on feelings that are unreliable, such as the old Protective Behaviours Program, because boys have told me that they have never felt safer than with a paedophile. In South Australia they were using the Protective Behaviours Program — ‘You are safe with me; what I am doing is safe’. They will go out of their way to make the boy feel special and loved, and of course they choose kids whose dads are not there or whose dads are the tough guys and they give them affection. One of the messages I give to groups of men is to be affectionate with their sons because, if they do not do it and they find a paedophile, then he will, making them feel special and important. They boost their egos.

Then when they give them all this stuff that is associated with adults, it is used for blackmail. Initially a child may think that being touched sexually is okay, it might feel good and it may be presented as fun and what real men do. Then of course when it gets painful and unpleasant they want to opt out. Then they cannot if they have had alcohol, cigarettes and all the things that parents ban at home — ‘What will your mum say when she knows that you’ve been doing this, that and the other?’ — and they are trapped. That causes enormous psychological harm, because they cannot escape.

Mr O’BRIEN — Thank you. I appreciate that that was a fulsome answer and a very good analysis of the situation. I am also looking for any empirical data on this correlation, because we see a lot of anecdotal stories where that is part of the message, but I have not seen empirical data as percentages.

Prof. BRIGGS — Old research from the Salvation Army had I think a 70 per cent correlation between alcoholism and child sex abuse, and I am sure you know that your Dr Bill Glaser found a 70 per cent correlation between child sex abuse and mental illness. In an article that was published by the Australian Institute of Criminology in around 2001, he described paedophilia as the biggest health problem that we face.

Mr O’BRIEN — It is always good when someone keeps all the Google information in their head. Thank you, Professor.

Mr WAKELING — Thank you, Professor, for your presentation. I will take you to your evidence with respect to the 84 offenders that you have had the opportunity to investigate. You are in a unique position because not many people who present to us have had that contact. Firstly, to clarify, you said that many were victims who then became offenders. Do you have an idea of what percentage?

Prof. BRIGGS — All except two, and the two were interesting. They were in Port Augusta jail, and they were there because they had had affairs with girls marginally younger than the age of consent and had been dobbed in by their wives. They were not attracted to children per se, but all the others were.

Mr WAKELING — If we can then take it that a very large percentage — obviously you have looked at only 84 — of offenders are victims, from your discussions with those offenders, did they identify any patterns or practices that governments or others could put in place to try to prevent that action from occurring, or is it institutionalised within their own lives such that it does not matter what systems we put in place or what laws we change, because they were a victim and they were effectively put into a mindset where they were going to become a perpetrator regardless?

Prof. BRIGGS — They saw the fact that they did not get help, could not get help, when they were being abused — that it was ignored — was very significant, and they were quite angry. Some of those who were not abusers told me that they were worried about their sexual attraction to children. They were attracted to children of the same age that they were when they were first abused, and they were attracted to lonely-looking and sad-looking children. Another interesting thing that we found but we could not delve into because it was not in our research agenda was that we found that boys who were sexually abused by men only sexually abused boys only, boys who were sexually abused by both men and women sexually abused both boys and girls — and that was 100 per cent. We did not have anybody who had only been sexually abused by a female.

Now the abuse by a female was interesting. They did not see it as abuse at all, because it did not hurt. Usually it involved older sisters and their friends, and you could not work out whether they were doing this for teasing or cruelty or what, whether it was for sexual satisfaction or just because they wanted to do it. But some had been

sexually abused by schoolteachers, by grandmas, by next-door neighbours, by babysitters — all females. They did not think it did any harm; they were quite happy to talk about it. But it clearly did, because they were often the first.

Now 50 per cent of the prisoners had been sexually abused by a female first, which surprised me. I expected the women's groups to challenge me there, but nobody did. Interestingly they had a phone-in in Western Australia at about the same time, and 50 per cent of the men who phoned in were talking about being sexually abused by females, which is just as damaging, and they use the same methods as the men do. It is about the abuse of power.

What the damage was was the early sexualisation of the child. Okay, it did not hurt; they might have even enjoyed it. But the fact that they were sexualised became obvious to other people. A paedophile can go into a classroom and tell you which children have been sexually abused, and I am pretty good at it now. There is just something about the child. Male perpetrators then spotted these children, and they were abused again and again and again — which is why they were the ones who were in jail.

Mr WAKELING — Thank you. As you say, many are victims and many feel angry because of the fact that it occurred to them and society did not put measures in place to stop it, so ultimately we are looking at a number of victims that are coming now into adulthood.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — That are potential perpetrators, if we follow the same line.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — What can be done for those people to try to prevent that from occurring, or would your summation be that there is literally nothing that can be done for those individuals; governments need to put policies in place to try to protect them from having access to children?

Prof. BRIGGS — Well given that they are all in school or preschool, again I emphasise the need to be educating teachers. Because what usually happens is when they start behaving sexually — and it can be as young as five — they are just treated as naughty children. Where is the treatment for these children? In New South Wales I found there is not any. In South Australia we have CAMHS, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. We have a program specifically for boys over the age of 12; I am not sure about the girls. This is where we need to be putting some energy, because if teachers can recognise these children and get them to be able to get help — parents do not want them getting help because they do not want their children labelled. But what you normally find is that the school principal, who is not that well educated in this specific area about child sex offending, will support the child and the parent in denial — you know, 'He's a good kid, he comes from a good family', di da di da. There is a section on that in that book as well, I am pretty sure. I have got a whole chapter on this huge problem now of children who are behaving sexually and inappropriately.

Mr WAKELING — Just one final question.

Prof. BRIGGS — Can I add another one?

Mr WAKELING — Sure.

Prof. BRIGGS — With your boys who are juvenile sex offenders, not all of them have been sexually abused. Ian Lambie's work is worth looking at. He is at Auckland university in the department of psychology. He found — it is in my book, but he found — that about half have been sexually abused; the others are likely to have lived in sexually violent environments, and with some it is part of their criminal behaviour.

Mr WAKELING — Thank you. If I may, from an international perspective, because of your involvement.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — We have had evidence led to us in terms of experiences of other organisations internationally — police and government agencies. But are there any legislative changes that governments have put in place which have had a positive outcome in terms of preventing child abuse, that we should potentially

look at? You may wish to take that on notice, but we would be interested to see if from an international perspective there is something we could look at.

Prof. BRIGGS — Yes, you were ahead when it came to treating child sex offenders. Some of the men that I encountered in my research kept in touch with me. They genuinely wanted to change. They went into Ararat and another jail out there, where they had treatment. But I felt that Corrections were not really into rehabilitation, and misunderstood. For example, one had been abused all his life; he had been an abuser since the age of 12, and he did not think that three months treatment was going to be enough for him. But because he said that, it was held against him. When it came to him being released I was asked if I would be a supporter. They had to have three supporters. And of course he had sexually abused his own children, so he had lost his entire family and did not have a support other than a nun. I agreed, because if I can help somebody to stay on the straight and narrow, I will. I came over here. I went to Ararat and spent a whole day in the jail, where he had to tell me all about his offending, which was very painful for everybody, so that I knew what his grooming methods were so that I would know when he was getting into difficulties. There was a psychologist there as well to remind him if he forgot anything, and because he had been offending for a long time this went on for a long time. I was there all day. Then I came over here, again at my own expense, to Carlton, where I did another program. I did not learn anything, but because I was being a supporter I had to do it.

The prison did not even bother to tell me when he was released. If he had not contacted me personally, I would not have known, and they never, ever checked up to see how he was getting on. He actually stayed in jail for three months longer than he needed to. He had been raped in jail. He got hepatitis C and has subsequently died. He died last year. He did not want to go into a hostel with the people who had raped him. Because of that he was again thought to be a difficult prisoner. He actually stayed in jail for three months longer. Can you imagine how difficult it is being in jail and trying to find accommodation? You are out in Ararat, and you have to find accommodation in Melbourne so you can go to Carlton. You have got nobody to help you. You have got to find it and then get permission from the people in jail for you to move in. Where you find it has to be away from schools, kindergartens, bus stops or railway stations — anywhere where children might be; it is a horrendous task. I got the impression that even though you have a separate program there for child sex offenders, it is a bit short on the rehabilitation.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Professor Briggs. On behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for being before us this afternoon, for providing the evidence that you have and for coming over from South Australia. We do appreciate your time, and your evidence has been most helpful. Thank you again.

Witness withdrew.