

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

Melbourne — 12 April 2013

Members

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Mr M. McAllion, CEO, vicsport.

The CHAIR — On behalf of the committee I welcome Mr Mark McAllion, the chief executive officer of vicsport. Thank you for being before us this morning. We do appreciate it. All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses may be asked to return at a later date to give further evidence if required. All evidence given today is being recorded, and witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript. Please note that these proceedings are not being broadcast.

We are very pleased to have you before us, Mr McAllion, in relation to your peak body, vicsport. The committee has heard from a number of witnesses, and we are particularly interested in looking at leadership aspects and how to prevent child abuse into the future for our Victorian children. Thank you very much for providing your submission. It is very comprehensive. In your submission, you talked about vicsport being a peak body. It covers 170 member groups, 16 000 clubs and associations and an estimated 1.8 million participants, workers and volunteers. Can you tell me, out of those 1.8 million people, how many of those would be children? Would you know?

Mr McALLION — I don't know off the top of my head, but I would estimate 30 to 40 per cent. But I can check that.

The CHAIR — That is fine. It is just giving us a rough indication of the proportion of children that vicsport and those associated memberships are dealing with. I think that highlights just the sheer numbers of children potentially at risk. I think that is possibly what the committee is trying to understand. We understand that there have been a number of abuses that have occurred in the past that vicsport is aware of. They range in behaviour and they have been perpetrated by various adults. I am just wondering if you could perhaps talk a little bit about those assaults that have taken place, how they were reported and what vicsport did in those circumstances.

Mr McALLION — Yes. We have not had any direct contact with any of those cases, so the cases vicsport refers to as it being aware of in its submission were predominantly those that have gone right through to conviction and we have basically been aware of them through the media.

The CHAIR — So the membership groups or sporting bodies do not actually notify you of the abuse occurring? Are you saying that you just found out through the public record once those convictions had taken place?

Mr McALLION — Yes, basically. For the cases that I am personally aware of, the sports have dealt with those issues internally through the policies and procedures that they currently have in place. Then, yes, the knowledge that we have has been after the fact, where things have been taken further with the police or through the courts.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Do you think as a peak body you have a responsibility to understand in more detail some of those instances that might have occurred?

Mr McALLION — It is an interesting one. The structure of governance in sport is that our members are predominantly the state associations that then affiliate through to the national bodies. So I would suggest the state bodies that have had any contact with these types of cases have then worked through their national bodies to deal with them and not necessarily through a body like vicsport.

The CHAIR — Therefore you are saying it is up to the individual sporting groups that are dealing with those complaints internally?

Mr McALLION — That is my perception of how most would be handled, but in saying that, there are overarching policies that have been created through the Australian Sports Commission, then through the national sporting organisations, through the state associations and right down to the club level, which are the policies and procedures that should be used in the case of any suspected or witnessed child abuse.

The CHAIR — From that perspective, as the peak body do you talk with those national bodies at any stage in relation to those cases?

Mr McALLION — We have not, no.

The CHAIR — You have not?

Mr McALLION — No, we have not had any involvement in any cases of child abuse directly.

Mr McGUIRE — Mark, as you are aware we are looking at peak organisations and how we stop this issue from proceeding and get to the heart of what is a good preventive model. You are saying to the committee that there are national bodies that have an overarching responsibility. I just wanted to drill down a little bit on that. Is there any advice you can give us as to how you can make sure that once the policies are put out they are implemented? Is there a gap between theory and practice?

Mr McALLION — That is the greatest challenge for not only this issue but a lot of national policies and programs in sport. As I said, the Australian Sports Commission has templates and the sports themselves have national policies on member protection. Club templates have also been developed for clubs or local associations to adopt that are consistent with national policies. The state association's role is to try to promote those through the system as well.

I think it is fair to say that the larger, well-resourced sports are doing that to a greater degree because of their capacity. There are some sports that really do struggle to get those policies and programs right through their systems. My perception is that the resources are there; I think the compliance resources or the policies for the sport are out there to an appropriate degree. The challenge is, as you say, how we actually get that filtering right through so that the local club understands what its responsibilities are and what it should do in the event of a complaint or something coming up.

Mr McGUIRE — One of the key issues we also have to deal with is the grooming issue, where predatory paedophiles target children. They want access and then they go after vulnerable children as well. Is there any advice that you can give us? I know you have worked for Cricket Australia and at a national level as well. Drawing on that background, is there any advice you could give us that we could take up?

Mr McALLION — There are the national policies and then there are codes of behaviour for coaches, officials, volunteers, et cetera. There is a strong coach accreditation system that is trying to educate coaches and clubs on appropriate environments and appropriate behaviour by sporting officials in whatever capacity. Specifically in regard to child abuse, as I said before, I think the compliance policy side is there; I think it is more on the education and awareness side that sporting clubs and volunteers need to understand what type of environment they should be creating to ensure that this does not happen and, if there is suspicion of or there are incidents, they know how to deal with that.

At the moment a lot of local sporting clubs do the working-with-children check, have the policy in place and the code of behaviour on their websites and think they have done their job. It is the next step of education and awareness — understanding how to create an environment where, if an issue takes place, a child or parent feels comfortable enough to raise it with the hierarchy of the club or knows the steps to take it further, if appropriate, and when that does happen, the club knows how to appropriately deal with the situation.

Mr McGUIRE — So you are saying that the minor or less popular sports probably do not have the sophistication or resources to do it? What is your assessment of that?

Mr McALLION — I think it is certainly a greater challenge for the sports with less resources because potentially they do not have paid staff. The larger sports have paid staff out in the field that can be called upon by local clubs to assist in situations, whereas some of the smaller sports do not have the paid manpower out there to do that and largely rely upon volunteers.

Mr McGUIRE — What numbers are we talking about here? How many complaints? Where are they? How do you analyse that?

Mr McALLION — We do not. The point I was making before is that we are not across the specific complaints or situations that may or may not be happening.

Mr McGUIRE — Is that because historically there have been higher priorities or it has not been an issue of concern?

Mr McALLION — No, not at all. I think it is in the governance structure; it would be dealt with within the sport. The policies are not made by vicsport; the policies are from Cricket Australia and go through to Cricket Victoria through to the North Ringwood Cricket Club. If there is a situation at the local level, I think it would be escalated within the sport rather than through an advocacy body such as vicsport. I think there is certainly a role for vicsport to play in the education, awareness and promotion of the appropriate policies and compliance et cetera, but I am not sure. I have not considered that.

Mr McGUIRE — Because it is, as I was saying, particularly about grooming and particularly the coach's relationship to the young people who are dependent on them as their coach and their mentor. Quite often they take up the adult role in their lives as well, and we have seen media cases where that has proved problematic. What has been the response to those circumstances?

Mr McALLION — There are certainly codes of behaviour, and as part of the coach accreditation system there is a lot of education of clubs and of individual coaches et cetera on what is appropriate behaviour for coaches, for example, in dealing with children — things such as coaches not being left unsupervised with children, so there is more than one adult supervising at training and that type of thing. It is the same with coaches appropriately touching an athlete, if it is in the instruction of a skill to touch somebody's arm et cetera. It is pretty clear in the education of coaches what is and is not appropriate.

Mrs COOTE — Mark, thank you very much indeed. I would like to talk to you about gender and sport. In particular this committee has heard that a lot of paedophiles have been attracted to organisations and what has been reported to this committee is that it has usually been men that have joined various organisations, including religious organisations, to be able to get close to children in order to carry out their paedophile activities. I would like to ask you what is your understanding of women who are preying on small girls and are in fact grooming those girls for sexual purposes or manipulation or basically what we would call child abuse?

Mr McALLION — I have no direct knowledge of that type of behaviour happening, as in cases of females grooming young girls. There is certainly anecdotal evidence of that throughout sport. In some sports there is certainly discussion of female coaches or females grooming women, but I am not aware of any specific cases.

Mrs COOTE — In all of the information that you have given us and that you have spoken about today, are you aware of any specific gender-based programs or education programs in some of those sports that perhaps would attract these types of people?

Mr McALLION — I think historically there have been some sports, possibly male-dominated sports, that did not have junior development or junior pathways for young girls. You may have a situation where a young girl who wants to participate in a sport would have to do so in a senior environment, for example, a 12-year-old girl having to play at C-grade seniors in some sorts of competitions. There were certainly perceptions in the past that that was not a healthy environment for children to develop their sport, and that is where some of the anecdotal examples have come up.

Mrs COOTE — We are, as you know, inquiring into child abuse and that can be physical or emotional or sexual, and therefore in the educational programs that you have spoken of and in your role, particularly with national bodies, do you think it would be appropriate for your organisation to highlight this as an issue, because it is something that perhaps should be talked about or at least have some information in the packages that you send out?

Mr McALLION — Absolutely, 100 per cent. One of the questions that came up was is there an overreliance on the working-with-children check, for example. I think the sports sector has probably been following the legislative path, and yes, we have got the policies and programs in place, but I think it is that education and awareness of the role that sport can play to have these environments where the appropriate discussion can take place. It is not something that is talked about but it needs to be talked about more across the community.

Mrs COOTE — It does need to be talked about.

Mr McALLION — I think sport is just one example of that. From my discussions with our members, it is clear that the sport wants to take a lead role in creating healthy, welcoming and safe environments for children,

for adults and for everybody. The flipside to that is the capacity of the sporting organisations to do it appropriately.

Ms HALFPENNY — I am not sure where vicsport fits in. You have individual netball or football clubs and they have their national bodies that they go through and vicsport is across all of them. What is your main role?

Mr McALLION — We are an advocacy body, and as the peak association for sport our role is to advocate on behalf of our members to government and to other statutory authorities publicly as required.— —

Ms HALFPENNY — On the basis of a common interest amongst all sports rather than individual sports?

Mr McALLION — Basically, yes. As an example, I suppose we're similar to the Real Estate Institute of Victoria. Cricket Victoria and Tennis Victoria right through to parachute, darts, croquet running between, join us and then we represent our members on issues. We also run programs in education and professional development.

Ms HALFPENNY — What are some examples of the issues on which you represent your members?

Mr McALLION — When the working-with-children check was proposed, we went in and advocated for that to be free for sporting club volunteers. Our members thought that was an issue that needed to be pushed pretty strongly. If the state government is looking to invest money in sport programming, facilities — whatever it may be — we would then represent our sports on trying to provide the best outcome.— —

Ms HALFPENNY — Would you say it was more reactive?

Mr McALLION — Those examples probably are. It depends on the issue. Alcohol sponsorship in sport is one that we think we have been proactively talking to our members about to get their position, and then we can take it into VicHealth, the state government et cetera, so it is not necessarily just reactive, but it is sometimes.

Ms HALFPENNY — In dealing with the prevention of child abuse in sport, from my own experience with children in local football or basketball or whatever, what can you suggest? Training for awareness is obviously important and probably is not there at the moment. There is also the issue of where volunteer organisations go if there is a concern. It may not be a criminal issue, but it could be inappropriate. Do you know what the processes are and whether in your view there should be some sort of external body that is able to assist clubs in terms of monitoring or investigating allegations and that sort of stuff?

Mr McALLION — Currently with the member protection policy we developed templates which, to my understanding, are used by the vast majority of sports. We certainly have a process in place for how to handle a case or if an issue has been raised. If there is any suspicion of criminal behaviour, that includes going to the police or the relevant child protection agency. As I said before, I think those policies are in place. For the local club secretary to understand that, know that and then can enact that appropriately at the time, I think is where the education is probably needed.

To answer the question of an external body, I think if it is a vicsport or an independent-type body that has not got any internal sport bias, if that is the right term, then it would be beneficial in the process to assist sporting organisations to deal with this appropriately, rather than just be inside the sport itself.

Ms HALFPENNY — We have heard from the New South Wales Ombudsman, and they play a role in monitoring and overseeing policy development within organisations as well as investigating incidents.

Mr McALLION — Okay. I know the Sports Commission has certainly been more heavily involved in the national policy development. I think I referred to the Play By The Rules resources as well, which have actually got some fantastic resources in layman's terms on how to deal with things or where to go and what process to take et cetera further to just the major national policies. I am not sure if that has answered your question.

Ms HALFPENNY — No, that is okay. In some ways I think what you are saying is that the policies and procedures are all there, and it is then a matter of how you actually roll them out and get them ingrained in organisations?

Mr McALLION — That is certainly our perception of where we sit at the moment. Absolutely.

Ms HALFPENNY — Thanks.

Mr O'BRIEN — Thank you again. Following on from that, specifically on the issues of working-with-children checks and the processes, there are two matters I would like you to address. There can be a concern that working-with-children checks can throw up false negatives, in a sense, and there can be an overreliance on a clearance when in fact there may be issues. Could you perhaps touch on some of the cultural practices that your organisation recommends specifically to sporting clubs to deal with that? Perhaps on the other side there are also concerns that they can create overly restrictive bureaucratic processes or procedures that seem over the top. Maybe there are good reasons for them, and that is where we need cultural change, but also, as I said, in some instances they deter families from participating because they are too much to go through. Could you go through those issues? They are certainly the debates we need in our clubs.

Mr McALLION — Absolutely. We did a lot of work with the working-with-children check when it was being developed as far as, as I mentioned before, advocating for those to be free for volunteers. We also did some work on the process and the bureaucracy of getting a working-with-children check et cetera. The feedback we have got now is that, from a process point of view, the system is reasonable and has been taken up quite well at club level. If I look at, say, the strengths and weaknesses of it, there is a perception that it would discourage people with a criminal record from becoming involved in sport. It certainly does give the clubs some peace of mind, whether that is false or otherwise, but I think it does give clubs some peace of mind that they are not appointing someone who is inappropriate.

The weaknesses are that you can get a check for one organisation and have not nominated that to another organisation, so you may be volunteering at a primary school, and if you get a working-with-children check and nominate the school on that and you then become a sports coach, something happens and you are convicted of something, then the school will be notified but the sports club may not be. There are certainly limitations, and that is recognised. There is also the time lag, so if something happens in a period, then the sporting clubs probably only ask, 'Have you got a working-with-children check; what is the number?', and they will record that, but they may not be going back to check. You may have got it two years ago, covering off anything that is happening in that period.

Mr O'BRIEN — What do you recommend to clubs? Obviously there are the policies we could go to specifically — in the ASC there is member protection on cyberbullying, sexual relationships between coaches, and you have got alternative policies at 6.4 for that — for example, taking images of children. Could you go through some of the ways you recommend eternal vigilance beyond a working-with-children check clearance?

Mr McALLION — In addition to?

Mr O'BRIEN — Yes.

Mr McALLION — There are the codes of behaviour that are promoted to all volunteers or people working within sporting clubs. They are, as I touched on before, things such as one individual adult not working with a group of kids without other adults involved; what is appropriate communication with children; what is appropriate as far as competition expectation and training, workloads and all those sorts of things are concerned. There are pretty strong codes of behaviour. The challenge is: who is monitoring that at the local level when the coach — and the reality is that it is 5 o'clock on a Wednesday night — has the kids all roll up for training? In most cases that we are aware of there is more than one adult there, but there is certainly the potential for adults to be unsupervised, and that is tough for local club administrators to cater for and deal with. I do not know if I am answering the question but I think the code of behaviour, the policies, they are there; it is just how they are — — —

Mr O'BRIEN — How they are implemented in each place?

Mr McALLION — How they are implemented is the challenge, by organisations with often low capacity and being run by volunteers.

Mr O'BRIEN — Are you getting feedback from your organisations that as far as the government rules are concerned we have the balance right or do we need to do more to insist on stricter controls, and those controls being implemented? What is your view in terms of recommendations for where we take these issues?

Mr McALLION — The challenge is obviously that the working-with-children check, as an example, is only looking at people who have offended and have a conviction et cetera. My understanding is that a lot of people who do engage in inappropriate behaviour may not have a criminal record. So there is that challenge that a working-with-children check is not answer, and I think sport knows that. It is not the only answer; it is part of the solution. I think it is clubs actually understanding the total issue and being vigilant in making sure that volunteers within their structures are working appropriately and the environment is one where parents understand what appropriate behaviour is, the kids understand what appropriate behaviour is by officials, and the whole environment understands it and is supportive of promoting the right message.

Mr WAKELING — Thank you very much for your presentation. Can I take you to your submission. We also have an attachment, which I believe you provided, from the Australian Sports Commission, which is a template national organisation member protection policy. In that is a range of template policies that organisations can adopt, and it includes the reporting of child abuse allegations and a confidential record of formal complaint. Is it your understanding that that only applies to the peak organisation in terms of policy or is that something that is then filtered down to the state bodies and, more importantly, to the club level?

Mr McALLION — I am not certain of which document you have a copy of in front of you, but there is a national sporting organisation member protection policy. And then from that there is also a club template that has been developed for use at the club level. The intention and the theory is that the national body would have the policy, each state would have a complementary policy, and then that would filter down through the club system.

Mr WAKELING — I am just showing you the document, just to make sure that it is the right one.

Mr McALLION — Yes. That is the national organisation version, and there are complementary club versions of that policy. So the theory is that it is top to bottom.

Mr WAKELING — Okay. I am assuming that the national bodies are required to sign up or have policies in place, but at a state or, more importantly, at the club level it is not mandated to your knowledge?

Mr McALLION — Yes, to my knowledge, I do not know.

Mr WAKELING — I am reading from part of their funding arrangements.

Mr McALLION — Correct. For the national sporting organisation to be funded by the Australian Sports Commission they need to have a member protection policy in place. It would be the same at the state level. So for the state sporting associations to receive money from the state government they would need appropriate member protection policies in place. Some sports would mandate the adoption of these policies. The problem is whether clubs are actually implementing the policy. It is a policy that is now on their website and the club has signed up to it, but are they actually implementing it? That is the challenge at the local level, and there is no way we can answer it.

Mr WAKELING — I understand that, and that has been part of the evidence that has been led to us through this inquiry, and not just from sports but a whole range of organisations dealing with children, that it is piecemeal in terms of whether or not the organisations on the ground — individual football clubs, in this example — would have those policies in place, and more importantly, whether or not members are then educated on what those policies are. I suppose the question I would have for you in your capacity as CEO of vicsport is: do you believe that that should be something we should be looking at in terms of a mandatory perspective, as legislators? Or do you believe a voluntary code is more appropriate in this respect?

Mr McALLION — It is a good question. I think there should be a mandatory policy in this regard — philosophically, no question. Then I think if we do that, though, what is the supporting education and assistance that will be provided through the system to ensure that the local committee that is there to provide some great sporting opportunities for kids and is all of a sudden dealing with pretty heavy issues — —

Mr WAKELING — You may wish to take that on notice as well, because you may want to give some extra thought to that in terms of its impact.

Mr McALLION — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — Which leads me to the next question, which is about a point that you have raised in your submission — that is, the impact on volunteering. I am interested that you said that with anything that happens we have to be mindful of volunteers.

Mr McALLION — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — Local footy, local netball, local soccer does not happen if it is not for mums and dads running these sports.

Mr McALLION — Absolutely.

Mr WAKELING — As legislators we are all mindful of that, but we also have to couple that with the need to protect children, and that is what we are grappling with. Could you provide some further commentary?

Mr McALLION — I hope none of my comments are suggesting that the burden on volunteers is a more important issue than child protection. That is certainly not the intention. But there have been challenges in recent years for sporting volunteers and probably community volunteers of all sorts with the greater regulatory burden that has been placed upon them. If that is risk management, if that is responsible service of alcohol, if that is food handling, et cetera, all of which are more than appropriate individually, when they are all being lumped together at one time for the volunteer sporting club it can be overwhelming for them. I think regulation and legislation are certainly needed in a lot of areas. It is then the support and the capacity of those organisations to implement it appropriately that needs to be taken into consideration.

Mr WAKELING — Finally, I am interested in the culture of sport, particularly junior sport. Many of us deal with a lot of local junior clubs, particularly football clubs. I know that my clubs have been dealing with the issue of becoming Good Sports accredited, tackling the excessive consumption of alcohol in terms of its messaging. Whilst we are looking specifically at child abuse, we are also talking about cultures in organisations. Do you have an opinion on that, particularly about the culture that clubs have? Whilst it may be with alcohol, it is about dealing with the whole issue of what is an appropriate environment in which families, but more importantly children, should be involved.

Mr McALLION — Certainly our members — state sporting bodies — and vicsport in general is a lot more cognisant of the need to have family-friendly and appropriate environments at the local level. I know that the state associations are working hard on creating those environments, and that is about Good Sports, appropriate alcohol consumption at sporting clubs, et cetera. This is another example of where sport can play a role in the community to lead the way in some way and show how we can create a healthy environment at the local community level. We certainly fully support the Good Sports program, and we have seen some fantastic examples of where poor culture in sporting clubs has been turned around to create much better family-friendly environments that everyone can be involved with. It is certainly one that sport is conscious of and is working on, and this could be something that fits into the same category.

Mr WAKELING — On that mandating, if it were to be mandated, we would be very keen to know about your views of the impact that may have on your member clubs.

Mr McALLION — Are we talking about mandating a member protection policy at a club level?

Mr WAKELING — Yes.

Mr McALLION — I think the impact initially would be that it is potentially overwhelming, so that is where the follow-up support and education are required. I think the current template is in appropriate club language, if that is the right term, so it is more about supporting clubs that do not have the expertise at the local level to fully comprehend what they are adopting, what it means and what the processes are. There are some sporting clubs that could adopt it, have adopted similar policies and have people with expertise from outside in their own working lives dealing with these types of policies and issues. It is about supporting those that do not have the capacity or expertise to deal with it.

An example is the public liability insurance issue. I am trying to remember how long ago it was now, but I know the state government stepped in and put a fair bit of resource behind supporting sport and educating sport

on how to be, how to reduce risk in the club environment, what to ask and how to actually get appropriate insurances in place. I think there is the potential for a similar type of intervention here from state government.

Mrs COOTE — It was called the public liability insurance scheme.

Mr McALLION — That is right.

The CHAIR — Off the back of Mr Wakeling's questions and your comments to him and of Mr McGuire's in relation to those smaller sporting groups that I think you said struggle because they do not have the resources, and in relation to what Mr Wakeling has just asked and the example you have provided with the public liability insurance scheme, what numbers of sporting groups are we talking about that a mandatory component would assist?

Mr McALLION — There are approximately 16 000 sporting clubs in Victoria. Are you talking about the ones without the resources to help themselves?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr McALLION — Probably the top 8 to 10 sports in size have significant resources and a reasonably large staff. When I say large staff, we are still talking about small organisations. To give an example, AFL Victoria has reasonable resources and is dealing with its clubs on policy issues all the time, but in saying that it is still a challenge to get out to all the footy clubs because of the number of footy clubs compared to some other sports. The interesting part is that the top 8 to 10 sports probably cover 70 to 80 per cent of the participation.

The CHAIR — That is what I am asking. There is a gap of 20 to 30 per cent of sporting bodies that struggle to have the resources to put the policies and procedures in place. If there were some assistance with the mandated aspect that was suggested by Mr Wakeling, do you think it would assist those 20 to 30 per cent?

Mr McALLION — Yes. There would still be assistance needed for all the sporting organisations, but I think that is where the real need would be in that regard.

Mr O'BRIEN — Given the time and given your advocacy role, I ask you to turn to attachment D4, which is the ASC protection procedures for handling allegations of child abuse.

Mr McALLION — Sorry, is it under 4? Within the policies?

Mr O'BRIEN — Yes. I will not try to test you too much, although how personally familiar you are is a relevant question. It is on page 34.

Mr McALLION — Got it.

Mr O'BRIEN — Just in your educative role, could you go through the procedures that are outlined there and offer any additional commentary. Obviously it is self-explanatory in a sense, but it may be of use to this committee and the community generally that you are speaking to when you are looking at these issues of education.

Mr McALLION — So you want me to just — —

Mr O'BRIEN — Just read through. You have a four-step process, from initial receipt.

Mr McALLION — In the four-step process, step 1 is an initial receipt of an allegation. I think that is actually about appropriately dealing with someone coming forward with an allegation or potential case of child abuse. That is hard in a lot of local sporting club settings. I am sure it is extremely difficult in all settings, but often that may come to the president of a local sporting club who has potentially never dealt with anything like this before. But there are some dot points there on an appropriate way to receive that allegation.

Mr O'BRIEN — If I can just stop you there, it has some issues, including:

Listen, be supportive ...

Reassure the child that what has occurred is not the fault ...

...

And importantly:

Ensure you are clear about what the child has said but do not elicit detailed information, ask leading questions or offer an opinion;

...

Do not discuss these details with any person other than those detailed in these procedures ...

Do not contact the alleged offender.

It sets out there some basics for people to deal with. If you could take us then to step 2.

Mr McALLION — Step 2 is to report allegations:

Immediately report any allegation or disclosure of child abuse ... to the police and/or government child protection agency.

That is certainly the message that these policies, the Play by the Rules resources and other resources within sport are sending: if there is potential criminal behaviour, then report it to appropriate authorities immediately. That is the message.

Mr O'BRIEN — I note the second dot point says if there is any doubt you can contact the agency for advice. That is another issue we have received, and it is in that policy there, in the second dot point. Take us through step 3.

Mr McALLION — Sorry, I was just going to note the last dot point in step 2 is to report the allegation to the CEO of the national sporting organisation. That is that system where an issue would be dealt with within the sport. That is what this policy is certainly promoting.

Mr O'BRIEN — I note a similar dot point is on the front page of the Play by the Rules material, again consistent with your evidence that it should go to the national representative.

Mr McALLION — Yes. Then step 3 is to protect the child and manage the situation, so trying to take the child out of a risky situation if one exists. Then step 4 is internal action.

Mr O'BRIEN — Which deals with interactions between criminal investigations.

Mr McALLION — With the police, yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — You might like to take us through the first dot point on the page about the findings.

Mr McALLION — It says:

Irrespective of the findings of the child protection and/or police inquiries, the —

national sporting organisation —

will assess the allegation to decide whether the person should be reinstated, banned, have their employment or position terminated or any other action.

So even if there are not criminal findings, the sport has the ability, if it believes someone is inappropriate to be a coach or an official within sport, to stand them down from their position.

Mr O'BRIEN — And again, and perhaps to conclude, could you address the last dot point on that page?

Mr McALLION — It says:

If disciplinary action is taken, the —

national sporting organisation —

will advise and provide a report to the relevant government authority should this be required.

Then it gives the example of the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People.

Mr O'BRIEN — Thank you for that. I appreciate your time.

The CHAIR — Thank you. On behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for your availability this morning. We do appreciate it, and your evidence has been most helpful.

Witness withdrew.