



The Facts

Protecting your child from sexual
abuse at daycare:
An essential guide for every parent

Overview

1. Frequency of sexual abuse in daycare centres
2. Key daycare centre areas targeted for sexual abuse - beyond the changeable
3. Perpetrator profile - looking beyond carers
4. How perpetrators keep working in daycare centres: A case for the police to answer for
5. Using your local community facebook page to find other potential victims in a an anonymous and non-defamatory* way
6. Types of acts against children
7. Sexual abuse signs in children <11yrs
8. Age appropriate conversations with children and books to aid discussion
9. Responding to suspicions of abuse and professional support

*this is not legal advice and should not be relied upon as such

Presented by Mary Jane M. Psychology

2024: A brief literature review of daycare child sexual abuse research, more comprehensive contemporary Australian research from Demographers, Forensic Speech Pathologists and Forensic Psychologists is needed. Australia



“

When something is unbearable, you place the unbearable under lock and key and away from you ... so you can cope. Dissociation happens when you detach your body from your world as if it is not real. You dissociate from something when you most need it. Your body wisely protects you.

”

**David J Ebaugh -
Trauma Specialist**



A guide designed to prevent dissociation, enable adult action and community response when faced with child sexual abuse signs in relation to daycare

Take action at the first signs

Call 1800 RESPECT to
talk your concerns
through, no matter how
big or small they are.



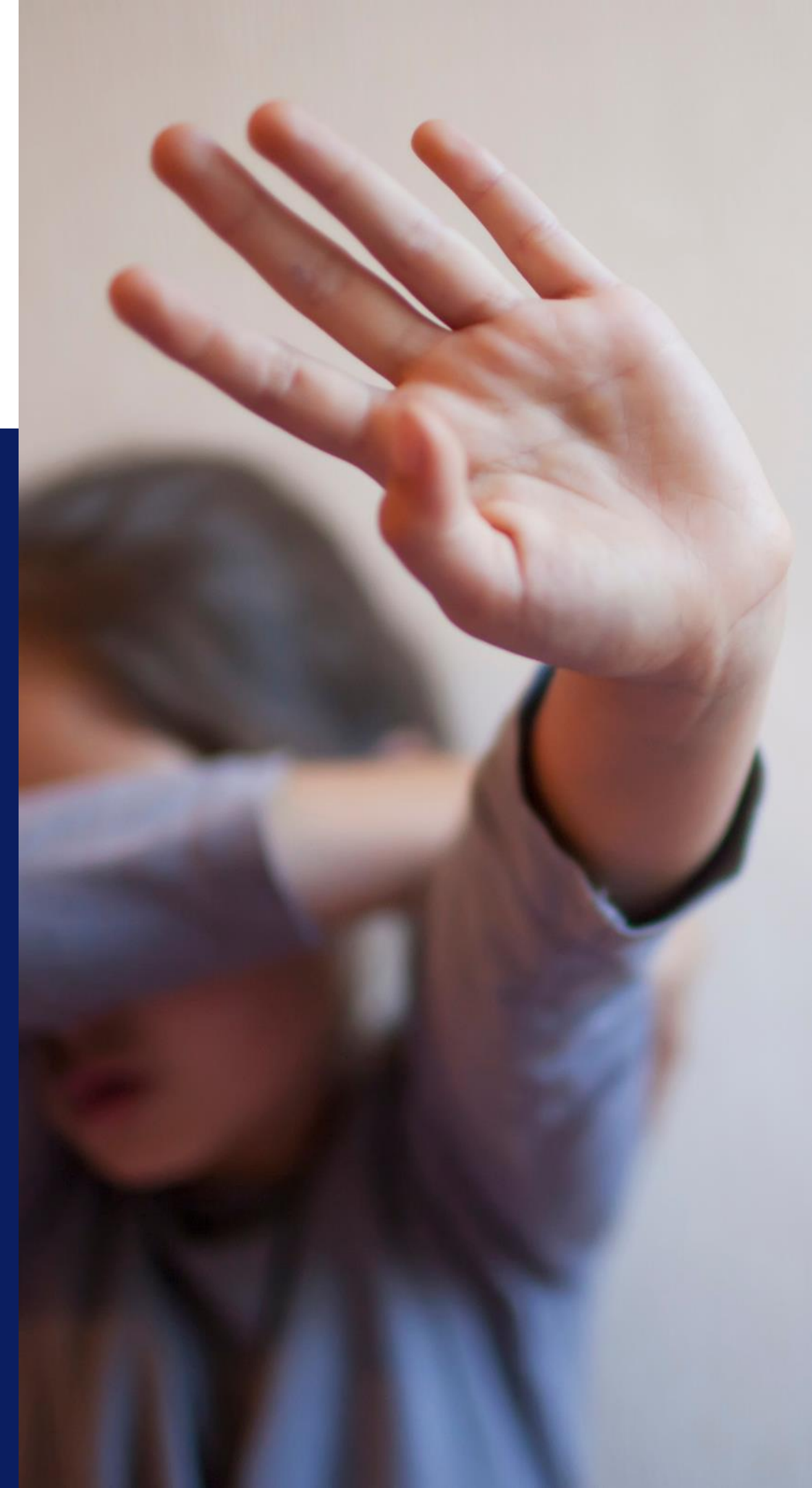
Know the facts

1 in 10 men

have committed sexual
offences against children
(Human Rights
Commission, November
2023)

1 in 4 children

have been sexually
abused and 1 in 10 in care
outside the home (Abel et
al., 2019)



Know the facts...

Police reports reveal that in Australian females perpetrate 1% to 6% of all reported Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and 5% to 31% of all female perpetrated CSA occurs in an organisational setting whilst caring for children. (Child Wise, 2006)

Know the facts...

- **Only 35% of cases involve immediate staff. Predators could be in any number of positions: carers, directors, family of carers/directors, bus drivers, just to name a few and they could be male or female and work alone or with others (Finkelhor et al, 1988, Kelley et al 1993).**
- **Abuse could occur anywhere in the centre with one study finding only 66% occurring in the bathrooms (Finkelhor et al., 1988).**



Know the facts

Disturbingly, each child abuse case in a center or by non-family member tends to involve an average of

4.4 instances of sexual abuse

66% female and 34% male victims

Finkelhor et al., (1988) Sexual Abuse in Daycare a National Study from the Family research laboratory, Executive Summary, A study of substantiated cases of abuse in the US.

Richards K. (2011) Misperceptions about child sexual offenders. Trends Issues Crime Crim. Justice;429:1-8.





Gold Coast man Ashley Griffith was charged last year with more than 1600 offences, including rape. NINE

Mother questions how childcare abuse accused was allowed to keep working Brisbane Times, October 25 2023 Dan Nolan

April 2022 Kym's daughter told her mother at bedtime that "Ashley touched my privates". "My heart sank but I said 'who is Ashley?' and she said 'the man teacher' or 'the boy teacher'," Kym said.

She also notified Queensland police, who conducted an interview with the child. That interview was conducted without any parent or support person in the room, as per Queensland police guidelines.

"She was hesitant, of course, she'd never met these people before. It took us a while to warm her up to want to be in the room without us," Kym said.

She said her daughter repeated her claims but became confused when she was given a teddy bear to show where he had allegedly touched her.

Police determined there was not enough evidence to continue the investigation. "The detective did say to me afterwards, 'I've been doing this for a really long time, I deal with a lot of children who have been interfered with and your daughter doesn't seem like a child who has been interfered with'," Kym said.

Mother questions how childcare abuse accused was allowed to keep working Brisbane Times, October 25 2023 Dan Nolan

The investigation was handled by the Child Protection and Investigation Unit at the Boondall police station, which had also investigated a previous complaint against Griffith about six months earlier.

That October 2021 report came from a childcare teacher who alleged she had seen Griffith kiss a young girl whilst sleeping. It had occurred at a different Brisbane childcare centre, run by the Uniting Church, which was also dismissed by police.

Police were unable to secure a search warrant for Griffith's devices, claiming the report it received did not involve "physical contact".

When Australian Federal Police officers arrested Griffith in August 2022, he was working at a Gold Coast childcare centre and 4000 images of child abuse material were discovered on his phone and other devices.

It was only after new Queensland laws unmasking accused sex offenders came into effect three weeks ago that Kym discovered the teacher her daughter complained about was the same man accused of being Australia's worst paedophile.

A Queensland police spokesperson confirmed that Griffith was not interviewed by detectives about the second complaint in April 2022 because the alleged victim "did not make disclosures of an offence to police".

"Additionally, childcare centre staff and management informed police, the man was never left unsupervised with children and the offence could not have happened," the spokesperson said.

A case for the police to answer for



- ✔ **Why was a detective offering opinion on the level of trauma in an allegedly abused daycare aged child? –What did he mean by ‘look interfered with’?**
- ✔ **How is a disclosure of touching private parts not classified as an offence?**
- ✔ **How did this man commit over 1600 offences, many of which were at daycare centres without any prior charges?**
- ✔ **Why wasn’t a forensic psychologist consulted?**



The police don't track unsubstantiated allegations of abuse and don't always have enough 'evidence' to take action.

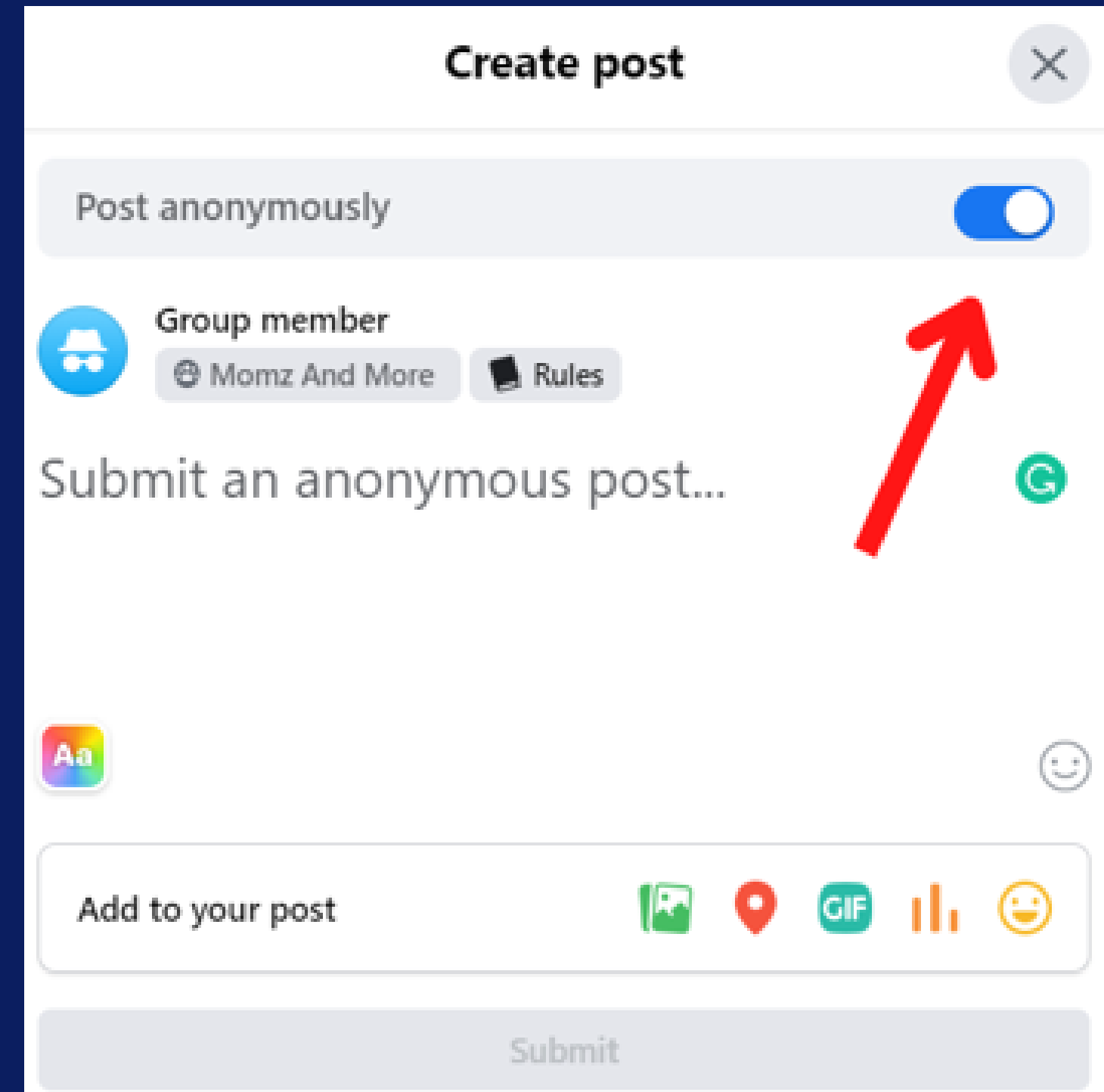
As parents and as a community we need to band together

Find other victims with local community pages

Prepare an anonymous facebook post listing signs of sexual abuse in children at local daycare and your concerns directing people to go straight to the police or local hospital

Avoid defamation* and use the term allegations, **do not** name the centre or Perpetrator

*this is not legal advice and should not be relied upon as such



Lobby the Government

Sign petitions

- Write a letter to your local minister and shadow minister for health and police.
- Make anonymous media presentations, identities of victims must be hidden. Contact the larger media stations.

Questions to ask your daycare centre?

1. Do they have a child protection policy? (does it define signs of sexual abuse)

2. What child protection training do the staff/volunteers and parents receive?

3. Do they have cameras in play areas and change areas?

4. Are there areas at the centre that are not visible to other staff?

5. Have you ever had an incident or complaint of suspected or confirmed sexual abuse?

6. What do they identify as the most vulnerable areas in the centre for sexual abuse or the most likely perpetrators and how do they manage it? (check to see if they provide answers beyond change tables and carers)

The types of sexually abusive acts committed in day care

- Range from fondling of genitals to vaginal and rectal intercourse.
- Penetration with a foreign object to be more prevalent among female perpetrators, especially in cases with multiple perpetrators
- Foreign objects include pencils, needles, knives, scissors and crucifixes

In some cases daycare aged children are shown/told about wands, swords & knives during penetration with another object to distort and discredit child disclosures.



Child disclosures of sexual abuse

Children were threatened coerced and terrorised (Susan et al., 1993)

33%

of cases it took 6 months

50%

of cases took a month

17%

disclosed immediately

Susan J. Kelley, Renee Brant, Jill Waterman, (1993) Sexual abuse of children in day care centers, Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 17, Issue 1, Pages 71-89,



Threats of death and harm were used frequently “something very bad will happen to you or you family if you tell.”

Threatened harm from monsters, snakes, demons and spiders. Harming animals to create fear.

How we find out about it?

Parents noticing some signs of abuse and asking questions

37% of time the child disclosed abuse

Sexual Abuse in Daycare a National Study from the Family research laboratory, Executive Summary, A study of substantiated cases of abuse in the US (1988) Finkelhor et al.,



Will the other staff at daycare centres protect your children and report sexual abuse?

Very few cases of staff members disclosing abuse because:

- ✔ A great deal of reticence and reluctance to report
- ✔ Massive ignorance and inattention
- ✔ A few cases of actual covering up of abuse, on the part of staff

Sexual Abuse in Daycare a National Study from the Family research laboratory, Executive Summary, A study of substantiated cases of abuse in the US (1988) Finkelhor et al.,





Parental responses

- ☑ Parents often did not believe their child's disclosures
- ☑ Family response is important in predicting how well a child recovers



Sexual Abuse Signs (<11yrs)

- ✓ Regression in sleep (wake ups, needing parents to sleep)
- ✓ Increase in anxiety or fears, emotional outbursts, tantrums
- ✓ Sore red/chafed genitals, bleeding from private parts
- ✓ Playing with genitals
- ✓ Complaining of sore genitals, or that someone has stuck something in their genitals
- ✓ Unexplained bruises
- ✓ Sexualised behaviour
- ✓ Sexualised play with dolls (only 2% false disclosure rate with dolls Emerson and Boat 1990)
- ✓ Pubic hairs in diapers

Adapted from Raising Children Network [Pubic hairs in diapers](#)

Everson, M. D., & Boat, B. W. (1990). Sexualised doll play among young children: Implications for the use of anatomical dolls in sexual abuse evaluations. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 29(5), 736–742.



**Talking with children about sexual abuse
is part of creating safe environments that
help children grow and thrive**

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Bravehearts.org.au

Books are also a great way to start conversations about child sexual abuse.

- Everyone's got a bottom by Tess Rowley
- My body belongs to me by Jill Starishevsky and Angela Padron
- Some secrets should never be kept by Jayneen Sanders and Craig Smith
- Let's talk about body boundaries, consent & respect by Jayneen Sanders and Sarah Jennings
- Someone should have told me by Holly-ann Martin and Marilyn Fahie
- My underpants rule! by Kate and Rod Power
- No difference between us by Jayneen Sanders
- Milly's Message by Liz Walker.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE PARENT GUIDE

to protecting children and
young people from sexual
abuse.

HELPING PARENTS AND CARERS TO START AND MAINTAIN CONVERSATIONS THAT
CAN HELP PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION.

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Responding to suspicions of abuse

A child or young person's behavior and words may show signs of potential harm or unsafety.

- Avoid frightening them by refraining from confrontational or leading questions.
- Initiate a conversation using prompts such as 'I'm noticing' or 'Are you x..?'
- Reassure the child that you are available to talk whenever they need support.
- Document your concerns, including behavioral observations and conversations.
- Fulfill your obligations by reporting to relevant authorities as soon as practically possible.

Contact: Bravehearts 1800 272 831, 1800 RESPECT or au/reachout.com.au

Your local Children's' Hospital for examination

Source: Adapted from www.bravehearts.org.au

Professional Support

- ✔ Play therapy certified psychologists or social workers specialising in sexual abuse
- ✔ Forensic Psychologists/Speech Pathologists
- ✔ Sexual Abuse Criminal Injury Lawyers

See Bravehearts, 1800 RESPECT etc.. for government funded therapeutic support options.



Our duty as a community

It is our responsibility as adults to safeguard the well-being of these incredibly vulnerable young individuals. They spend their days beyond our direct supervision, lacking the ability to articulate their experiences or defend themselves. These little ones are in many ways voiceless, and easy targets for potential threats and manipulation.



Thank you!



Justice for Lincoln
PROTECT DAYCARE CHILDREN