

The Jewish Community Takes Action Against Organisational Child Abuse

April 18 2013



JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF VICTORIA INC
מועצת הקהילה היהודית בוויקטוריה
"דישטר קהילה-ראט פון וויקטאריע"

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria, the roof body of Victoria's 60,000 Jews will give evidence at the Victorian Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government organisations.

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) has taken the leadership in Victoria to protect Jewish children from organisational abuse. As the peak body organization, with 60 affiliates, representing 60,000 Jewish people in Victoria, it is incumbent upon JCCV leadership to ensure that community organisations, have good policies and practices in place and those that work with children become accredited under the Australian Foundation for Children, *Safeguarding Children Program*.

Children are inherently vulnerable. Parents expect - and the law requires - that children will be safe from harm or abuse be it at school, camp, youth group, sporting clubs or any other community setting.

Nina Bassat AM, President of the JCCV said in many instances, community organisations already have effective policies and procedures for ensuring that abuse in any of its forms is, to the greatest possible extent prevented. However, Presidents have the responsibility, and authorization to ensure that their organisations are as safe as they can be.

Ms Bassat stated, "The JCCV has convened a Child Protection Reference Group to: act as an additional resource to assist community organisations to strengthen their child protection policies and procedures; promote resources to educate and empower parents regarding child protection; and assist with referrals to professional support services, where required.

The JCCV is not alone. There are many programs being actioned in the community such as Rabbinical training and community education by the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence; victim support groups through the Australian Jewish Psychologists; and victim advocate groups ousting perpetrators and misinformation. Indeed, the Zionist Youth Council is to be commended for their extensive accreditation of all Jewish youth groups through the Australian Childhood Foundation. Chabad Youth and Jewish Aid are also to be commended for starting this process.

Andrew Blode, Chair of the Reference Group, said, "child abuse within Jewish organisations is not systemic. There are a very small minority of people who work as staff or volunteers within the Jewish and wider communities, who have an unhealthy interest in obtaining access to children and young people." Andrew continued, "given the specific challenges of child protection, policies can vary between organisations and in the absence of good risk management, organisations can unwittingly make themselves vulnerable.

306 HAWTHORN ROAD
CAULFIELD SOUTH
VICTORIA AUSTRALIA 3162

TELEPHONE 03 9272 5566
FACSIMILE 03 9272 5560
info@jccv.org.au
www.jccv.org.au

ARN A0039459M

PRESIDENT
NINA BASSAT AM

VICE PRESIDENT
DR HELEN LIGHT AM

TREASURER
IAN JONES



For support and advice, contact the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence on 9523 2100; SECASA on 1800 806 292; or Gatehouse Centre on 1800 806 292

For further information, contact JCCV President Nina Bassat AM on 9272 5566 or Jo Silver, Project Manager, on 9272 5642.



JCCV CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

3.30 Child Protection

This Council:

3.30.1 AFFIRMS that all children have the right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

3.30.2 NOTES that the Victorian Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) establishes inter alia the fundamental principles that:

- i. society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the wellbeing and safety of children; and
- ii. those who develop and provide services, as well as parents, should give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

3.30.3 ITERATES Jewish values that emphasise the importance of our youth, and Jewish laws that recognise the vulnerability of children and prohibit physical, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse and/or neglect and/or maltreatment of children of any and all kinds from any source.

3.30.4 ACKNOWLEDGES that the Jewish community is not immune from the scourge of child abuse in all its forms as well as neglect or the impacts on children growing up in an environment of family violence. Child abuse occurs in all societies, in all faiths, at all socio-economic levels and within all levels of religious observance.

3.30.5 ENCOURAGES Jewish communal groups and organisations which work with children to prioritise the development and implementation of child protection policies and procedures, and to provide educational programs for children and adults, to ensure the safety of those children in their care.

3.30.6 ENCOURAGES Jewish communal groups and organisations to raise awareness of the prevalence of abuse and promote the safety and protection of children throughout the community.

3.30.6 AFFIRMS its support for Recommendation 10 in the Victorian Parliamentary Enquiry into Vulnerable Children, which states:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should develop a wide-ranging education and information campaign for parents and caregivers of all school-aged children on the prevention of child sexual abuse.

3.30.7 CALLS UPON anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect, or knowledge that a child is being harmed, or who is at risk of harm, to report it to the appropriate authorities, namely the Department of Human Services or its equivalent and/or Victoria Police.

3.30.8 CALLS UPON the Jewish community to do its utmost to assist community members who make disclosures of abuse to find the care, help and support they need, and avoid the imposition of any stigma, ridicule or discrimination by reason of having reported the abuse or having been a victim of such abuse.