

ADDRESSING THE RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Submission from Protective Behaviours WA (Incorporated)

About Protective Behaviours WA (Incorporated)

Protective Behaviours WA Incorporated (PBWA) is a West Australian not-for-profit organisation focused on child abuse prevention education. The organisation provides information, training and resources to public and independent schools, non-government agencies and organisations, Government departments and directly to parents, families and communities across the State.

PBWA is led by a governing body with representatives from Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Education, WA Police and a range of non-government agencies. The current Executive Officer, Andrea Musulin holds the dual roles of EO for PBWA and Safe Guardian Coordinator for the Perth Diocese of the Catholic Church. PBWA's offices are co-located with the PCYC head office in Kensington, WA.

In addition to providing Protective Behaviours training to a range of agencies and organisations, PBWA currently has partnerships with the WA Police (Child Abuse Interview Team) and the Department for Education to deliver high quality child abuse prevention training and direct service delivery to children and parents.

Specialised qualified learning and development facilitators have expertise and experience in delivering, identifying and responding to child abuse, understanding trauma and child abuse prevention education (protective behaviours) in the following areas:

- *Early years (0-5 years of age)
- *Primary school (K-year 6)
- *Secondary school (year 7-year 12): including specific information relating to the grooming process
- *Children and young people with a disability
- *Indigenous children and young people and their families
- *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children and families
- *Children who have experienced trauma and are living in Out of Home Care
- *Professionals and paraprofessionals in the field of early years, education, out of home care, youth, child protection, police, health and disability services

The Protective Behaviours Program

The Protective Behaviours program is both proactive and when required, reactive to the issues and occurrence of child sexual abuse. Whilst the ultimate responsibility to protect children rests with adults, children themselves can play a part in their own safety. Many children however have not been exposed to the skills or knowledge to do so and this capacity is therefore diminished. The crime of child sexual abuse adheres to the recipe for crime theory that involves 10% desire, 10 % ability and 80% opportunity to commit the crime. Protective Behaviours education assists in reducing children's vulnerability and therefore reducing the opportunity to commit the crime of child sexual abuse.

The program's primary aim is to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring and for those children who have been, or are currently being sexually abused it provides a framework to empower children to speak up and disclose.

PBWA has developed child abuse prevention curriculum for early years – secondary students incorporating the 10 topic areas below:

1. **Theme One “We all have the right to feel safe at all times” & Feelings**
2. **Early Warning Signs** (the physical sensations we experience in our body when feeling unsafe or excited.)
3. **Safety Continuum** (safe/fun to feel scared/risking on purpose/unsafe) & **Problem Solving** (How could someone feel safe even if...?)
4. **Theme 2 “We can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is” & Safe Secrets/Unsafe Secrets** (including understanding the grooming process for secondary students.)
5. **Networks** (Disclosing - Identifying adults that we can talk with and ask for help if we feel unsafe/scared/worried.)
6. **Persistence Expectation** (Persisting in asking for help until you feel safe again.)
7. **Body Awareness and Ownership & Private and Public** parts of the body (including teaching and using the correct anatomical names for private parts of the body) Private and Public clothing/Private and Public places/Private and Public Behaviours/Public and Private Information (including cyber safety).
8. **Personal Space** (social distance) & **Safe and Unsafe Touch**
9. **Assertiveness** (body language/tone of voice/NO GO TELL)
10. **Theme and Program Reinforcement**

Submission

Topic E: Education, training, professional support and primary prevention

1. What obligations should schools have to ensure that their teaching and non-teaching staff are aware of and comply with applicable codes of conduct, professional standards or child protection policies?

PBWA believes that every staff member in government and independent schools (including school boards) should receive annual training on codes of conduct, professional standards, policies and procedures relating to child protection. This also requires professional training on understanding the grooming process as without the knowledge and understanding of perpetrating behaviours of sexual abuse offenders, these grooming behaviours can be minimised or dismissed and may not be identified as a critical incident requiring the child protection policies and procedures to be followed.

2. What role does teacher education, training and professional support (including university study, pre and in-service training, and mentoring/support), play in equipping individual teachers with skills and confidence to identify behaviours indicative of, and to appropriately respond to risks or incidents of, child sexual abuse, and to children displaying problem sexual behaviour?

PBWA believes that pre-service teachers and teacher assistants should receive meaningful and professional training in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse by professionals in the field of child abuse prevention.

Recognising developmentally inappropriate problem sexual behaviour and managing it within a school setting is an area of concern highlighted by many teachers and schools to PBWA. PBWA provides education sessions directly with children displaying problem sexual behaviours as well as supporting schools to provide Protective Behaviours sexual abuse prevention education in classrooms for all students.

3. What should school systems do to ensure their schools consistently deliver effective sexual abuse prevention education? Do such programs address barriers to children disclosing abuse, including the specific needs of children with disability, with English as a second language or with other particular vulnerabilities?

PBWA believes that a holistic approach to child sexual abuse prevention is most effective. This includes the following:

1. **Protective Behaviours Professional Development for teaching and non-teaching education staff** in schools facilitated by qualified and experienced child protection experts (1-2 days – at least biannually) including :
 - *solid foundation of understanding the grooming process
 - *protective interruption strategy
 - *responding to a disclosure
 - *creating a safe learning environment
 - *theory of the Protective Behaviours 10 topic areas
 - *link to the Australian Curriculum, K-10 syllabus and the National Safe Schools Framework
 - *information on curriculum materials and how the program caters for an integrated learning approach as well as specific delivery within the Health and Physical Education learning area

* practical teaching and learning ideas, experiences and tools to equip teachers and schools with the knowledge, ability, confidence and resources to customise their protective behaviours lessons to meet the needs and abilities of their students and provide learning stimulus to develop concepts and strategies in each topic area.

2. **Protective Behaviours information workshops for parents and carers** facilitated by qualified and experienced child protection experts (3 hours – offered yearly) including :
 - *child abuse statistics
 - *understanding myths and truths about child sexual abuse
 - *understanding the grooming process
 - *practical and age appropriate examples of how to teach children the 10 topic areas of the protective behaviours program in the home environment and reinforce learning from school.

3. **Protective Behaviours Professional Development for service providers in the community** who provide services to children, young people and their family, to ensure a whole of community approach to child sexual abuse prevention, facilitated by qualified and experienced child protection experts (1-2 days) including :
 - *solid foundation of understanding the grooming process
 - *protective interruption strategy
 - *responding to a disclosure
 - *theory of the Protective Behaviours 10 topic areas
 - *practical teaching and learning ideas, experiences and tools to equip service providers with the knowledge, ability, confidence and resources to customise their protective behaviours sessions or incidental learning opportunities to meet the needs and abilities of their clients.

4. **In school coaching and mentoring**

It is recognised that some teachers may feel uncomfortable teaching certain aspects of the Protective Behaviours program for a range of reasons (including their own trauma history). These teachers will benefit from coaching and mentoring to assist with the delivery of the child abuse prevention content of the program.

Health and Physical Education staff, child protection champions and school management may form a school implementation team and require coaching and mentoring from qualified and experienced child protection experts with the aim of enhancing the health, safety and wellbeing of students through developing a protective behaviours implementation plan which contributes to building healthy, safe and active school communities.

5. **Additional education sessions for vulnerable children**

Children who are at a higher statistical risk of child sexual abuse including children with disabilities and children who have previously experienced abuse and trauma require more intensive Protective Behaviours education. In addition to the holistic approach of

integrated learning and specific delivery in the school system, reinforcement of protective behaviours skills and knowledge at home and the wider community, PBWA provides individual, group and family education sessions for children. These sessions can be tailored to meet the specific learning and developmental needs of each child.

PBWA has developed a five session, weekly protective behaviours education program for children who have experienced abuse and trauma. Direct referrals are received from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and experienced and qualified trainers facilitate, in the home environment, teaching and learning experiences to develop the protective behaviours concepts, strategies and skills in each topic area.

PBWA has developed a pictorial resource specifically designed as a learning stimulus to develop the protective behaviours concepts, strategies and skills in each topic area for children with disabilities and worked in partnership with Disability Services Commission to trial the resource in 2014. This resource is now available to all schools in Western Australia.

PBWA has developed an Aboriginal workbook resource specifically designed as a learning stimulus to develop the protective behaviours concepts, strategies and skills in each topic area for Aboriginal children and worked in partnership with Department for Child Protection and Family Support and WA Police in 2013 to trial the resource. This resource is now available to all schools in Western Australia.

Throughout 2015, PBWA has worked closely with the Australian Islamic College of Western Australia (K-year 10) to develop culturally appropriate professional development and student curriculum materials for CALD children and young people. All staff at the Australian Islamic College received Protective Behaviours Professional Development in 2015. All students attending the Australian Islamic College received Protective Behaviours lessons during 2015.

6. Protective Behaviours for Young People in Secondary Schools

In response to the Blaxell Inquiry, PBWA in collaboration with the WA Department of Education and WA Hostels Authority developed a three hour "Teenager's Guide to Personal Safety" workshop, designed to be delivered to children and young people from 12 years of age – 16 years of age in school and community settings.

This workshop includes:

- *understanding myths and truths about child sexual abuse
- *understanding the grooming process
- *understanding the methods used by sexual abuse offenders to silence children and young people to prevent them from disclosing
- *understanding sex and the law
- *understanding consent and coercion
- *sexual violence and unwanted sexual behaviours
- *developing networks of trusted adults and appropriate help lines

Sample feedback from young people who have engaged in the workshop:

What did you like best about today's workshop?

- I liked the discussion. (year 7)
- I liked that we learnt that it's never the child's fault it's always the abusers. (year 7)
- Learning new things and making me feel more safe if this happens to me again. (year 7)
- When I was told we were not alone. (year 7)
- I liked how she accepted that if we couldn't handle it she allowed us to leave for a minute or two. (year 7)
- The way it was presented gave me a safe feeling like you would not be alone. (year 8)
- I like the stories. (year 8)
- It helped me understand more about sexual abuse. (year 8)
- I liked being able to talk about it openly. (year 8)
- It made me think. (year 9)
- I learnt a lot and I am aware of so much more.(year 9)
- It wasn't boring and we learnt lots of things.(year 9)
- It had real life situations and ways to deal with things. (year 10)

What is something that you learnt in the workshop about keeping safe?

- Speak up if you are uncomfortable even with well-known people. (year 7)
- That you are never alone. (year 7)
- If you get into trouble or a difficult situation talk to an adult and don't think it's your fault. (year 7)
- Don't be embarrassed. It's not your fault. Don't keep it to yourself. (year 8)
- Tell someone as soon as you can as this seems to have the best results. (year 8)
- Always tell someone you trust straight away before the problem gets bigger. (year 8)
- It told us and helped us understand things and what to do and how. I learnt not to be afraid (year 8)
- No means no. (year 9)
- Grooming things to look out for. (year 9)
- Don't blame yourself. (year 9)
- Lots of people want to help you. You just need to tell them. (year 9)
- It's ok to change your mind. (year 9)
- That people who are nice can still harm you. (year 9)

For further information please contact:

Protective Behaviours WA (Incorporated)

Executive Officer Protective Behaviours WA (Inc)

Andrea Musulin

andrea@protectivebehaviourswa.org.au