

Submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Issue 9, Risk of child sexual abuse in schools

I write as a mother and protective parent of children who have been sexually abused, and as their advocate.

[REDACTED]

Note that lack of transparency in the system makes it difficult to know exactly what has been said by whom, and who has been influenced by who, so when relating my own experience I have done my best to represent those involved accurately. I believe that auditing of records and a proper investigation would confirm what I write here.

I am making a submission to the Royal Commission because of an experience that has highlighted shortcomings within the community at large, and our school staff specifically.

Following I offer:

- A. the submission questions addressed
- B. a summary of our experience
- C. education essential to addressing children's safety
- D. educational booklet ideas - for children, for parents/advocates
- E. research and implications

A: the submission questions addressed

Topic A: General questions

- 1. How effective are the policies, procedures and/or practices schools have adopted to minimise or prevent, report and respond to risks and instances of child sexual abuse?**
 - *Not effective. I believe that the reason there is a focus on “older crimes” in the media is that victims rarely disclose within two years of the crime, and many not at all. Unfortunately the work of the Royal Commission may be giving some people the mistaken impression that child sex abuse is an old problem, and no longer an issue.*
 - *My reading has shown that very few schools have policies in place.*
 - *I have not seen any communication from the State and Catholic schools that I have children enrolled in that suggests that they have or enact a policy aimed at protecting students from sexual abuse, or at responding to reports and disclosures made to staff.*
 - *The response from our school staff was non-empathic and showed huge gaps in their understanding of the dynamics of child sex abuse and the needs of the survivors and their protective parent/advocate.*
 - *When I reported home based sexual abuse to staff at our local school the school staff resisted any action that might involve them as a court witness. This impacted their ability to support the children.*
 - *There is a stark lack of transparency, and pervasive victim blaming, cognitive dissonance in action and discrediting of the victims within the school community and especially within the staff.*
 - *The staff reported on child behaviour to Child Protective Services (CPS) with the confidence of an authority, while their ignorance is clear to those of us who have taken time to learn about child abuse. This unqualified intervention manifests as system abuse.*
- 2. How can compliance with legislative obligations and child protection policy requirements by schools and their staff be encouraged? Should there be penalties for non-compliance, and if so, in what form?**
 - *I have worked in Aged Care, and observed there that mandatory training goes unattended until there is a real threat of dismissal from duties. There should be training available to and mandatory for parents, staff and all workers, volunteers etc.*
 - *For staff and all workers the training should be mandatory, completed before participation, and annually thereafter, with failure to attend resulting in dismissal.*
 - *For parents attendance to an education session should be mandatory prior to enrolment and every three years after that. (If we are successful the wider culture will absorb the learning and we can begin to reduce the formal teaching about child sex abuse. Until that time formal education is necessary. Parents could receive a small financial incentive for attendance, and equally be penalised by failure to*

attend and participate appropriately. NO adult can accurately judge themselves or others as sufficiently knowledgeable of child sex abuse.

- For staff and workers (as per WH&S definition): to avoid the influence of human prejudice the requirement should be that certificate of attendance is entered into a National database that automatically informs the employer/institution of failure to comply at 12 months plus 2 weeks, with dismissal/non participation enforced at 12 months and 4 weeks post previous attendance.*
- There should be an Australia wide policy on child abuse that is mandatory within all Australian schools and institutions.*
- Home Educating families should be included in the requirements, as they would benefit equally from education and training in this area, and are equally capable of following a policy and creating strategies to support disclosure and to support children who have disclosed.*

3. What are the particular strengths, protective factors, risks or vulnerabilities and challenges faced by schools within different education systems in preventing, identifying, reporting and responding to child sexual abuse? Is there any rationale for having different legislative obligations and policy requirements relating to child protection for government and non-government schools?

- As our goal is the protection of all Australian children, there should be an effective strategy that is applied to all schools, both government and non government, and home educators, across all age groups including University and early childhood providers.*
- I speak from my experience of dealing with a small rural school. Small communities can have the strength of communication and participation, but this depends very much on the culture at the school.*
- Sexual predators living locally often have a reputation. An inclusive culture within the school community would enable staff to become privy to such reputations through the parent and wider community. The correct response would not be prejudice, but mindful boundary setting in order to protect children.*
- Equally, a small community can be prone to grooming by sexual predators, whereby prejudice against the victims can grow over time.*
- A small community can be vulnerable by its reliance on volunteers, however with the right education this does not have to be a risk.*
- In our experience our school staff were easily influenced by police who reportedly told staff and possible witnesses that they didn't believe that the child abuse took place. Serious problems with the police investigation have come to light since, including a transcript that had over 230 significant "inadvertent" errors which removed details of disclosures, witnesses, and evidence. It is essential that staff understand the dynamics of child abuse, grooming, and discrediting by the sexual predator and cohorts. Note that Police around the world have been known to discredit victims. This is a real element of the required education around child sex abuse.*

- *It is essential that staff understand the role of cognitive dissonance as an obstacle to recognising, acknowledging, believing and responding to an incident of sexual abuse.*
4. **Do the nine elements of the 2009 National Safe Schools Framework effectively make schools safer for students? Are there any additional elements schools should adopt?**
 - *Depending on how it is delivered, the nine elements of the framework seem to cover the necessary areas of safety. Details of delivery should be agreed, published and enforced nationally.*
 5. **What regulatory, oversight or governance mechanisms are needed to ensure schools have adopted 'safe school' elements? How has their effectiveness been evaluated?**
 - *As a parent and advocate, I would suggest that there be an independent accreditation process, and an accreditation body to whom members of the community can submit concerns and suggestions. Something like the Aged Care industry.*
 - *Such an independent body should be staffed by at least 40% stakeholders such as survivors and their advocates, as survivors are the primary expert on the issue.*
 - *All education departments should have a Continuous Improvement programme that is widely advertised, and which volunteers, parents and past students can access without having to go through school staff. This should need not be limited to child sex abuse because seemingly unrelated issues can impact the safety of children.*

Topic B: Governance and leadership

1. **How could school governance arrangements be strengthened to provide better protection for children? What should be the role of: students, staff, principals, school councils or boards, governing bodies and education departments in reviewing current safety arrangements, incidents, decision-making and promoting child safety within individual schools?**
 - *All incidents should be published nationally and accessible to the public, and promoted to the public, with locations and names removed to protect victims' identity. The public can learn from this about the nature and prevalence of child sex abuse.*
 - *Education for all members of the community should promote a safe culture.*
 - *In our own experience, our Education Minister and school Principals have not taken our concerns seriously. I believe this to be partly due to lack of education, resources and ethics.*
 - *There must be an independent body, with the power to take action against those who resist efforts to make our children safe.*

- *There needs to be a mechanism for any person to report concerns in relation to a school, bypassing school staff if that person has concerns with the school, and which has mandatory investigation and follow up that is transparent.*
2. **What governance arrangements should be in place to ensure that teaching and nonteaching staff and other members of school communities have the support and confidence to identify and report suspected child sexual abuse without fear of negative repercussions for themselves or their careers?**
- *There should be an independent body that all members of the community can report to, and seek support from. That body needs to have the power to mandate ANY person in ANY role to take appropriate action in response to reports and concerns raised.*
 - *That body would be the judge of what is appropriate action. It should be informed by and at least 40% staffed by survivors and their advocates.*
 - *It should have the capacity to fine, mandate retraining and supervision, or dismiss those who persistently negate efforts to make our children safe, regardless of their role, status and seniority. The structure should ensure that even a state Education Minister is answerable to it.*
 - *The body should be able to protect the identity of persons raising a concern to avoid repercussions, but to facilitate action regardless of the legal or Family Court status of the case/survivor/advocate.*
 - *Concealing the identity of victims should not be an obstacle to taking action against those failing to protect children.*
 - *Family Court proceedings should not be an obstacle to taking action.*

Topic C: Protection and support services for children and specific student populations

1. **What needs to be taken into account to ensure that the full diversity of students are equally protected and equipped to voice concerns? Are the needs of children with particular vulnerabilities, such as children with disability, adequately addressed?**
- *A combination of education and an independent body that is accessible to students of all ages and their advocates should be provided.*
2. **What support services should schools provide for victims and others affected by child sexual abuse, either directly or through referral to external providers? Are schools able to ensure these services are provided and, if not, why not?**
- *To best answer this question I will relate my own experience following the sexual abuse of my daughters.*
 - *When I approached the school to tell them that my children had been sexually abused, my goal was to ensure that the teachers understood that my children may be feeling fragile, and that I invited staff to communicate with me about my children's needs.*

- *I was feeling shocked and unprepared, and unsure about processes etc surrounding child sexual abuse. I wrongly assumed that our school staff would be well informed and well educated about child sexual abuse.*
 - *I needed an immediate, prepared and empathic response from staff, recognising that I myself was experiencing trauma, and that I needed somewhere private to express my concerns, feelings and thoughts.*
 - *I needed to be able to tell staff enough details that I could be sure that they knew the extent of the trauma my children had experienced, i.e. the difference between a splinter in the finger and a severed hand, meaning that different experiences by different children will require different levels of monitoring and involvement by staff.*
 - *It would have been helpful to have an immediate referral to a counselling service for the children and I, specifically SASS (Sexual Assault Support Service), however it has been my experience that I was told by various service providers that I was doing a good job of assisting my children in healing and so we could not be put at the top of the list, or even on the list, for support.*
 - *Failure to attend some services has been referred to by some “professionals” as a failing while others acknowledged that it would be unhelpful to overwhelm my children and I by accessing every service that is offered. Failure to accept support should be acknowledged in writing so that it can not be used to discredit the victim/advocate later. The survivor and advocate are the experts on what their needs are.*
 - *An information booklet that could be provided by school staff would have been helpful, and I will discuss further on what could be contained in such a booklet.*
 - *Access to a children’s psychologist who the child can access weekly, with or without siblings, and that the psychologist give the child the option of working through the workbook “Finding sunshine after the storm”.*
 - *The workbook “Finding sunshine after the storm” is not explicit and is suitable for any child, particularly trauma sufferers. The workbook could be gifted to any child who has disclosed and others who had been exposed to the same perpetrator, or gifted to all students from the age of 6 to 14, once every year, two years or three years. It is a good tool for developing a sense of self, which builds resilience and security.*
- 3. What measures should boarding schools take to ensure that students are and feel safe? Are particular measures needed for boarding schools catering to specific populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students, or students in regional and remote areas? Will the draft National Boarding Standards for Australian Schools provide boarding students with stronger protection against child sexual abuse?**
- *From my experience, children are very unlikely to disclose abuse, especially while they are still exposed to or at risk of being exposed to their abuser.*
 - *My teenage daughter declined to use the school counselling service for fear of being “labelled”.*

- *The provision of a helpline via phone and video conference to be prominently advertised within ALL institutions and on school newsletters, on a business card given to ALL students upon enrolment and at the start of each school year.*
- *Provision for children to access the helpline anonymously, with the provision for anonymity being made clear in all promotional material relating to the hotline.*
- *Provision of an area where children are able to make telephone or videoconference calls privately to the helpline.*
- *Provide two staff members who can build rapport with the students, with whom students can speak candidly but appropriately about such topics. This would require specialised training.*
- *There is a strong taboo around this topic, and we cannot protect our children unless this taboo is broken.*
- *“Disclosure postcards” given to students that are postage paid to the Independent Body, requiring the bare minimum of details to identify and support the child:*
- *My own children became more confident in disclosing details when I gave them each an affirmation card, explained its purpose and placed it on my desk. I drew a heart on the back, and explained that if they ever have something that felt yucky to tell me, they could place it in my hand, and I would know to go somewhere private to chat. Both the 6 year old and 8 year old embraced the idea, the 6 year old was especially excited, seeing the card as permission to disclose. “Is that all I have to do, really, is that all I have to do, give you the card?” This card was given to them only after they had already spontaneously disclosed some details of heir abuse.*
- *Often times disclosure is almost impossible to express verbally. The card is a far easier way for a survivor to reach out for support. The postcards could be readily accessible to all students, in case they lose the one they have been given.*
- *Caution would be required if the card was to be posted into a box at the child’s institution, in case the perpetrator is in charge of managing the box.*
- *The following is a copy of the card my children used:*



- *a “disclosure postcard” should be available in a wide range of designs to suit each child’s interests, so that it is more likely to be taken home and put in a place where it can be found. An abuser may discover the card and “make it disappear”*

so ensure that the cards are readily available, discretely, to all students at all times.

- *On a few occasions since the original disclosures, my children have been “triggered” by items and memories, and on one such occasion Miss 6 brought me the card, told me she had something to tell me but that she couldn’t tell me, I said would it help if she pretend that she had told me, and that I believed her, and she nodded and relaxed, returning to her normal activities. The cards are a very powerful and cathartic communication tool for survivors.*
 - *Parents, staff and workers should be educated about the intention of the card (to support children to express themselves) and trained to respond appropriately - with empathy, belief and honouring the child as the expert on what they need.*
 - *The card should be available to all students, not limited to boarding students.*
4. **Do factors such as geographical isolation, distance from policy makers, and staff and student retention affect regional and remote schools’ abilities to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse? If so, how might they be addressed?**
- *the nature of our rural community enabled the perpetrator to install himself in a position of some power and “integrity” from which to ostracise and discredit his victims and their advocates. Education could address this, and must include campaigns via popular media e.g. Facebook and television to reach the wider community.*
 - *schools can develop their own culture that can continue despite staff changes. being accountable to an independent body in a way that excludes “box ticking” is essential.*
5. **What sorts of measures are needed to help protect younger children from the risk of sexual abuse by older children?**
- *Supervision. Education. Culture. Understanding of the low conscience disorders, lack of conscience and recidivism rates. “Disclosure cards” as described above. This applies to bullying also.*

Topic D: Registration of non-government schools, not-for-profit and corporate entities

1. **To what extent should a non-government school’s registration be conditional on it having strong child safe principles, policies or procedures (for example, concerning student health and wellbeing and complaints management)? How can the adequacy of individual schools’ approaches be assessed?**
 - *Registration should be entirely conditional on compliance, compliance including culture and education of all members of the community, and there should be a National accreditation agency responsible for this. The agency could oversee bullying management too.*
2. **What role could or should insurance, organisational or directors’ liability, as well as regulation by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and Australian Securities and Investments Commission, play where a registered**

school or corporate body fails to prevent, identify, report or respond to child sexual abuse?

- *An individual or institution that does not comply should not be eligible for insurances and registration.*
- *ALL institutions should carry mandatory insurance sufficient to ensure that when victims come to light, they can be adequately and appropriately compensated, including all costs of medical care and counselling related to the abuse, which could be decades in some cases. While this sounds like a large liability to be carrying, this will reduce in time if the other measures to educate and reduce abuse are carried out effectively and have the desired outcome of being absorbed by the community.*

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?

- *A school should ensure that their workers comply, and are dismissed if there is failure to comply.*
- *Reasonable communication e.g. emails, notice in staff room should remind workers of their obligation, and of how they may fulfil that obligation. All workers and Management should sign a contract acknowledging their obligation, and consequences.*
- *Managers/Institutions should be fined and ultimately lose registration and insurance if they fail to facilitate and ensure compliance by their workers.*
- *The community at large should be aware of the policies, processes, obligations and non-compliance consequences relating to child sexual abuse.*

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?

- *This is an essential part of the solution. Please see below where I outline items that must be covered in mandatory annual training if we are to develop a culture of safety for our children and their advocates.*
- *Communication to stakeholders of details of what training workers have received on the topic is essential.*
- *A survivor or advocate must have a good understanding of the skills and knowledge staff have in order to communicate effectively to them. There could be for example 5 streams of education, or 5 tiers, giving a quick reference that is published online for advocates to check on the knowledgeability of staff.*
- *In many cases victims and their advocates are far more informed than those working in education and in services, and it is essential we know the knowledge of*

those we seek support from, otherwise we may be misunderstood, and abused further by the system and those employed by it.

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?
 - *There should be a National curriculum that delivers appropriate training to workers, parents, service providers including police, and to students.*
 - *Such programs should 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.*
 - *This has been addressed in previous sections.*

Topic F: Reporting, information sharing, complaints and investigations

1. What barriers or fears might discourage or prevent individuals working in or with schools from reporting suspected child sexual abuse (whether the abuse is perpetrated by colleagues, volunteers, other students, other members of the school community or family members)? How could those barriers be addressed?
 - *If a person has been abused by the accused themselves then they may be resistant to outing their own abuse*
 - *Accusations of slander seem to be the main thing preventing adults from both reporting and from acknowledging disclosures of abuse.*
 - *Education about the reality of a slander case may convince more adults that they are safe to share. Education about how to report without being sued for slander would be helpful.*
 - *Cognitive dissonance causes most humans to resist belief in events such as child sex abuse. This is discussed further, and can only be overcome by education about cognitive dissonance.*
 - *parents may feel that they are a failure because their child has been abused. They may be embarrassed, or fear consequences to their children and self. Education of the wider community can assist, and appropriate response from school staff can help.*
 - *The various reasons people are resistant to believing disclosures of abuse must be considered in designing communications and education material. For example, in one family I know most adult children and grandchildren had been abused by the step-grandfather. Those who did not want to publicly admit that they had been abused were resistant to others “outing” the abuser. One woman ostracised her husband due to his efforts to protect his daughters, rather than be public about the abuse she herself had endured.*
 - *In my own case, I was disbelieved by Police who failed to view evidence, a Doctor used failure to convict to conclude that I imagined the assaults and am hence delusional. Staff and some parents are aware of this. Any person who knows that*

it is possible to be assessed delusional and locked in the psychiatric ward as an involuntary patient and, potentially, medicated against your will as a result of advocating for their sexually abused children or reporting sexual assault, would naturally be very reluctant to report any sexual assault on themselves or another person.

- It is essential that the gross abuse of the system in my case be publicised, but balanced with promotion of some very real changes to policy and culture that prevent such system abuse recurring, with the goal of reassuring victims and their advocates that they are not at risk of the same treatment.*
- In my case such changes would include: transparency around what is placed on file by investigating police, what is given to the DPP, a change in culture and education of all concerned about the role of all involved, i.e. that abuse cannot generally be disproven, that children do not lie about abuse, that mothers may act in ways we don't expect as a result of the trauma, shock, denigration and ostracism that is associated with child sex abuse of their children. Real consequences for badly behaved Psychiatrists must be put in place:*

- [REDACTED]*

- If a parent/advocate is discredited by police and the perpetrator it can be very difficult to stay involved in the community. Staff and community must be educated about the phenomenon of victim blaming, and of discrediting. Use real stories to highlight the problem as a reality, e.g. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11062452/Rotherham-child-sex-scandal-watchdog-says-police-tried-to-disprove-victims.html>*
- <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/about-us/news/discrediting-abuse-victims-must-stop-says-victim-support>*
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/apr/13/rape-sexual-assault-frances-andrade-court>*
- The incidence of Police telling staff and siblings that abuse did not happen is likely to reduce the likelihood of individuals both believing and reporting abuse in the future.*

- *Staff and others should be educated about the statistics around reporting and conviction so that they understand that very few cases are disclosed, less are reported, and ultimately very few achieve a conviction, but only 17% of the few cases that go to court have actually achieved a judgement of “not guilty”.*
 - *It must be emphasised that only the victim and perpetrator can ever know for sure,*
 - *and that while there will be many opinions about what actually happened, it is not in the capacity, and nor is it the role, for any police, DPP, staff, parent, counsellor, psychologist, Doctor or psychiatrist to assess whether or not the abuse in fact happened.*
 - *It must be emphasised that: “Children rarely lie about or imagine sexual assault. In 98% of cases their statements are found to be true. (Dympna House, 1990)” (https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf), and so the role of all involved is to believe the report and act in accordance with that.*
- 2. How effective are mandatory reporting and reportable conduct schemes in assisting to identify and report child sexual abuse in schools? If necessary, how might these schemes be refined to better suit school environments?**
- *I know of one incident where a mandatory reporter considered herself capable of assessing a situation herself and failed to report. She believed that rules did not apply to her, and that she is superior to others and could therefore make a better assessment.*
 - *In the past when I have required support from school staff they have avoided contributing in any way that may oblige them to attend court. I suspect an audit would find that staff are reluctant to report if they have no proof and if reporting is likely to oblige them to become involved in court processes. In my own experience the staff made inexplicable negative reports to CPS about me which were investigated and closed prior to my knowledge. The reports had absolutely no basis, could not have been supported by evidence, and could easily have been refuted. My lawyer told me “off the record” that it is common for a family to become “too difficult” for a school and that reporting to CPS is one way of ousting the family from the school.*
 - *Staff should be educated about the consequences to them of making a report. School sand staff should be supported so that they are not effectively penalised for reporting.*
 - *If a person is of low conscience they are more likely to empathise with a perpetrator than the victim. This is because seeing fault in the perpetrator requires a certain amount of self awareness. They equally may reflect their own faults on the victim as a part of the cognitive dissonance we employ to protect ourselves psychologically from frightening realities.*
 - *If they victimise children or others in general they are unlikely to report as this may attract attention to their own operation. This emphasises the necessity of an*

independent body for handling complaints, that is accessible to all members of the community, regardless of their age or role.

3. **What obligations should schools have to alert teachers, parents/carers, other schools (for example, where a student changes schools or progresses to secondary school) and other professionals when a child has exhibited problem sexual behaviour, or has engaged in sexually abusive behaviour?**
 - *A person who has immediate responsibility for that child should be aware of the behaviour, associated risks, and be supported to supervise at all times.*
 - *The parents should be notified empathically in person and in writing about the behaviours. (In my experience there has been a stark lack of communication with me about my children, except when I complained that my daughter had been bullied from Kindy to grade 2. At that meeting the response from the principal was to inform me that my daughter had various problem behaviours. there were no strategies or solutions offered. I was under the impression that I was being made to feel bad and to shut up about the bullying. After 4 years I witnessed the bullying child physically attach an older child from across the playground, completely unprovoked. That is what prompted me to take my daughter's concerns seriously.*

4. **How should investigations into allegations of child sexual abuse be undertaken within schools, and by whom? What measures should be taken to ensure that the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of children involved are considered?**
 - *If the perpetrator is within the school community they should not have access to children, and should be supported to find alternative occupation that dos not put children at increased risk.*
 - *Police should not conduct the investigation because they have a conflict of interest, i.e. their focus is on criminal investigation, and can be adversarial toward the victim and family and advocates.*
 - *An empathic third party who is knowledgeable about child sex abuse should conduct the investigation within the community, and report back to Police as part of the police investigation.*
 - *If the investigation is conducted by two people this decreases the risk of a non-empathic or corrupt person fulfilling that role.*
 - *Investigators should be teamed in pairs, and should be screened for the low conscience disorders (narcissistic personality disorder and anti-social personality disorder, and sociopathic/psychopathic tendencies as screened by Robert D Hare). They must have high emotional intelligence,*
 - *the investigation must be non-adversarial, and hearsay against the victim must be excluded. Hearsay against the perpetrator must be limited to the victim's testimony, and to witness testimonies, witnesses being those to receive a disclosure detail during or after the period of abuse, and those who heard or saw something they believe to be relevant.*

- *Opportunities for the perpetrator and cohort and those in positions of power, such as Police and SASS, to discredit the victim other than by verifiable fact must be excluded.*
 - *negative testimony about the victim and protective parent/advocate must be verifiable and relevant. All other negative testimony should be recorded including who made the statement, as this will be relevant in identifying those who are actively protecting the abuser.*
 - *The child must be accompanied by the protective parent and in a familiar and welcoming environment (let the parent and child be the judge),*
 - *any interview must be recorded by video,*
 - *a copy of the recording must be supplied with ten working days to the protective parent and child (to be provided to the child once they are 15, with counselling)*
 - *there must be transparency as to what is discovered, what is reported to other services and authorities such as Police, SASS, DPP. The protective parent/child should be given copies of all files without having to request them, and within ten working days of documents/artefacts being created.*
5. **Are there barriers which might prevent or limit appropriate and timely sharing of information about child sexual abuse (whether perpetrated by adults or other children) in school contexts? If so, do such barriers differ depending on which individuals, bodies or jurisdictions are involved (for example: sharing within and between schools, between schools and parents/carers, between schools and government agencies, regulators and oversight bodies, or across jurisdictions)? How could such barriers be addressed?**
- *I found it very difficult to access staff in a discrete setting at a suitable time. they are rarely available to parents for normal day to day issues, let alone sensitive issues. Staff should have a way of recognising if a parent needs to discuss something sensitive, and the school should provide strategies to make the staff available in a timely manner (immediately is required under these situations). Staff should recognise that if there is a new term, year or staff member then the child or parent may have anxieties that they need to raise with staff. These are “hot spots” during which staff should be particularly mindful that parents may need to talk about sensitive issues.*
 - *Extrapolating from non sexual abuse experience, when I have raised concerns about bullying behaviours toward my children, our Principals have consistently asked the “perpetrator” for their account of events then concluded that the victim lied or misunderstood.*
 - *The parent needs to know that appropriate information about the child’s experience is passed to subsequent teachers and principals. The child and protective parent should be involved in deciding what information need be passed on.*
 - *An understanding of the low conscience disorders tells us that perpetrators of any age consistently lie that they did not “behave badly”. While people in power are willing to manage bullying and abuse with disregard for the manifestation of the*

very personality types that exhibit these problem behaviours, victims will continue to feel that it is pointless to raise concerns.

- We need a narrative in western culture that recognises, understands and manages the low conscience disorders that are so often drivers for the perpetration of bullying and abuse. The narrative needs to understand that these people will lie even when caught ‘red handed’, that they do “bad things” just because they can, i.e. not necessarily for monetary gain etc., that sexual assault is about power and control, not about sex. It needs to recognise that people of low conscience are frequently not rehabilitatable, and have a high rate of recidivism. At this point I emphasise that a person of antisocial personality disorder or narcissistic personality disorder may at best have a low chance of rehabilitation, while a person exhibiting sociopathic traits has no chance of rehabilitation.*
- Our local school has not had a P&F Committee for about ten years. The Association has only two parents participating, and parent participation at many levels is largely discouraged. Parents known to agree with the principal on most matters are encouraged to participate. Forums purportedly for parent participation are influenced heavily by the association. For example the “3 year plan” required by the Minister is rarely created in conjunction with the parent community. When I knew about the requirement for such a plan I had to request the survey that purportedly allowed parents to contribute, and the survey was so narrow and limited in its scope that parents could choose only between specific art shows. Parents should be able to have a broad say on all areas of the school’s focus, themes and activities. Such micro management of the community is unhelpful, and leaves the door open for a toxic environment.*
- This reduces cross pollination of ideas, and exaggerates a specific culture within the school community.*
- This could be avoided if there was a Continuous Improvement program for education statewide or nationally.*

B: a summary of our experience

In 2010 my daughter disclosed that she had been sexually abused by a family friend. He was also Fire Chief of our local volunteer fire brigade of which I was one of the most active members.

I advised staff at the school as I thought appropriate; if a child is known to have experienced a traumatic event then it is helpful that staff know that the child is currently potentially fragile and might need some support.

In September 2011 I began living with a man who my children later disclosed had sexually abused them throughout the relationship. They had disclosed specific extensive plausible and convincing, though horrific, details approximately one month after I had broken the relationship (and engagement) off.

I myself had woken three times to find the accused in the process of raping me, myself being unable to speak or move at the time, so I was saddened but not surprised when the children disclosed to me.

I had hitherto believed the rape to be the acts of a shy man unwilling to express his sexual needs. When I discovered his dating profile online soliciting sexual encounters with men, women, couples and groups I realised that he was opportunistic and had sociopathic tendencies and above all was NOT shy. This is the point at which I broke off the engagement and made him move out. He began to stalk me, so I engaged police. Several weeks later the girls began to disclose extensive abuse by him..

At the time I believe I was in shock. The details were extensive and awful, and included descriptions of things such as sex toys and sexual acts that were beyond my own experience.

I told the staff of the disclosures. I did not give full details to school staff. I told them sufficient that they knew to have some concern for my children's wellbeing.

I had naively assumed that teaching staff are trained in the matters of sexual abuse. If they had been, the training and response was grossly lacking.

Here are some of the shortcomings of the staff response, which may assist the Department and others in identifying areas of training that need reviewing:

- Staff did not seem to be prepared for such disclosures.
- They did not offer empathy,
- Did not offer a discrete space in which I could give them appropriate information relating to the abuse
- Could not provide me with information, leaflets about any support services,
- Could not provide me with any guidance, e.g. what my legal obligations were if any, who I might report to, who to turn to for support,

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- At no time did staff initiate discussion regarding the abuse. Staff initiation may have been appropriate if my children's behaviour had been of concern, if my handling of them was of concern, if the staff could offer resources that were relevant. "Checking in" with me about the children's well being would have been appropriate.
- In 2014 Miss 6 became tearful at every "drop off" to school. The Principal suggested I drop her at the turning circle to cut the goodbye short. This resulted in me having a distressed child hovering at the turning circle, and me unable to park the car in that spot. I considered home educating full time. The Principal suggested I home educate Fridays. Miss 6 responded well to that. She seemed to like having some "control" over her situation. She returned to full time education at the school some months later. This has been represented to Courts and mental health Tribunal as a form of abuse. In fact, the staff had no strategies to suggest, and what I did was within my skill set and seemed to have the desired outcome: resilience in my daughter. The alternative was for her to experience trauma daily, which could have a dire long term affect on her well being.
- The services of the school psychologist were not offered immediately, I think it should have been. There is great benefit to an assault victim in having a person to who they can turn to and trust, whether or not they choose to raise the abuse.
- The school psychologist made it clear she would not participate in counselling relating to the abuse. I think it would have been helpful for her to provide and work through the workbook "Finding Sunshine after the Storm" with the girls.
- The staff naively believed police who told them (grossly inappropriately) that they believed the allegations were unfounded and treated my children and I accordingly.
- I was ostracised by the school community: myself and other parents were discouraged from participating in excursion and school activities;
- Shortly after the allegations were made, a new teacher approached me to pay me compliments for my role in organising the community Christmas carols. The principal hurried up to him and effectively "shoo'ed" him away from him, telling him loudly "No!". I subsequently found him to be somewhat cold toward me at school functions, even when I generously attempted to engage him in topics I knew were of interest to him.
- The Principal allowed the alleged accused of 2010 repeated access to the school grounds, purportedly through his role of fire chief, but as a volunteer fire fighter I know that his contact with the school children was not emergency related. While there he made "I'm watching you" and "cut throat" gestures at my daughters. There were bush fires in the area in 2012, and he used this fact to gain status within the community. The current Minister for education claims that

the perpetrator's access to the school was related to that emergency, however the man is a volunteer, and during such emergencies career fire fighting staff take over the management of operations. Other than that particular emergency there was no business for which the perpetrator could not receive the principal in his own offices, just a few hundred metres from the school.

- The principal allowed the 2010 accused repeated contact with my daughters while in the school's care, despite undertakings from the Minister for Education that that would not happen.
- My daughters were made to sit within metres of the 2010 accused and clap him and make cards for the fire brigade despite undertakings from the Minister that they would not be exposed to their alleged abuser.
- The school staff made negative reports to Child Protective Services (CPS) about my parenting. These were investigated and closed without my knowledge at the time. The accusations were so untrue as to be laughable, except that others have used the accusations to justify their own system abuse of my children and I. The school had supplied no evidence to support their accusations, as the accusations were untrue.
- Both of [REDACTED] teachers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], had personal relationships with both the perpetrators, and the 2010 perpetrator spent increasing amounts of time on site with Principal [REDACTED]. If these relationships had not been disclosed to CPS then the staff have failed dismally in objectivity. I have seen no evidence that such relationships were disclosed to Police, Doctors or CPS.
- More recent Principal [REDACTED] reported that my children would be safer with their father. The children had been in his care for only 3 weeks in 2014 and for three days in 2015. Prior to that he had been completely uninvolved with the school (to my knowledge). This is not sufficient time to assess a parent's capacity. I know the father to have a history of alcoholism, and to be non-communicative and not at all self-reflective. When my children disclosed to his sister they were told "it's not nice to tell lies". The Principal was not qualified to make the judgement of who would be a better parent. My lawyer told me "off record" that it is not unusual for teaching staff to use such investigations to oust a "problem family" from the school community.
- The Principal allowed my mother access to the children while in the school's care, against my wishes. My mother has narcissistic traits and I believe her influence on the family has made my children and I vulnerable to sexual predators.
- Principal [REDACTED] was deceitful and lied to me in December 2014 and February 2015. There are no circumstances under which that would be helpful to any party.

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- The school community seems to have disregarded any knowledge around grooming by perpetrators, of children, family and community. They have allowed themselves to be groomed by the 2010 perpetrator over a period of years.
- Our current Education Minister is using a toxic tactic called “Gaslighting” by refusing to admit the wrongdoing of the school community, despite written records that support what I have described.
- My children and I fit all the statistics that confirm us as highest risk for sex abuse.
- I was a single mother, living with a de-facto, both perpetrators “rescued” my children and I, making themselves indispensable, discrediting me throughout the period of abuse and grooming, they were both drawn to work with vulnerable people and in positions that gave some power over juveniles.
- The teachers, police and doctor did not allow me to present the multitudes of evidence that I have that supports the disclosures.
- Regardless of that, Police told teachers they did not believe the abuse happened, teachers told CPS they did not believe the abuse happened, and a psychiatrist used this circular reporting to assess me as having imagined that the abuse happened. Laws and codes of practice were broken throughout this process.
- There were three junior cadets in the fire brigade, and district officer ■ told me that of the three only two had paperwork, i.e. One boy was off record and so if abused would not be able to demonstrate later that he had attended the brigade.
- 2010 accused was known to have offered grade 7 girls a lift home from the bus stop, and yet he was working with the Principal to establish a project partnering grade 5/6 students with the fire brigade. In this way he could have made himself familiar to students, increasing the likelihood they would accept lifts from him once they were in grade 7.
- Accused persons should not be given opportunity to groom the school community and reduce the vigilance of protective adults. They are sicker than we are smart. It is foolish and neglectful to think that we can prevent an abuser from grooming students. It is foolish and neglectful to believe that we can distinguish between a perpetrator and an innocent person.
- There is a lot more to the story of my family. The school community has been just one part of the ongoing saga of abuse against my family and I. Their actions have perpetuated abuse against my children and I.
- I have thus far found it unbelievable that this could all be happening while the Royal Commission is in progress. It shows the extent of ignorance, and possibly the extent that we have given our adults a false sense of security around Child Abuse.

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- Staff reported that the children showed no signs of having been abused, then described that my daughter was quiet, and inexplicably attributed that to my parenting.
- There seems to be a perception that while great numbers of children get abused, it doesn't happen "in my town, in my suburb, it doesn't happen in my classroom". The result is further trauma for victims and their families.
- Over again school staff, police and psychiatrists have written that they do not believe what I said, that I do not present like a victim. The very things they point to as evidence that the abuse did not happen are things that are in fact true *because* I am a victim and a protective parent of survivors.

C: education essential to addressing children's safety

I recommend the following, and believe that all the measures listed below are required in order to successfully address childhood sexual assault.

1. A media campaign educating the public about child sex abuse

Television, Facebook, You Tube, with participation from survivors and their advocates, protective parents. Participation from community members who have been involved with sex abuse reports, AFTER they have been educated so as to avoid unintended abuse of the survivor and family.

2. Education for staff and teachers and for parents and others involved in school communities that is offered annually, and is mandatory for teachers, that teachers are de-registered if they fail to complete the training within a 14 month period, teaching the following: (there must be effective ways to ensure that staff do actually complete the training not less frequently than every 14 months, ideally every 12 months. Consequences for failure to train must be in place and must be upheld. Justification for those consequences (and reason for training requirement) must be reiterated regularly: This is not training in order to tick boxes. It is training to protect our children, and to reduce the risk that today's students will suicide later in life, and to reduce the risk that offenders will find others to be easy targets.

3. The statistics as provided by Braveheart in the attached document, specifically highlighting:

4. That Children rarely lie about or imagine sexual assault. In 98% of cases their statements are found to be true. (Dympna House, 1990) (https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf)

Children do not lie

Explore the parental alienation myth that mothers claim sexual abuse to alienate the father. In fact when women suffer family violence they have a real and valid fear that the father has abused/will abuse the children; lawyers and abusive fathers have been known to claim that the mother is alienating him, in order to attain sole custody of the child and hence alienate the mother. (<http://www.ncsmc.org.au/wsas/Documents/Practitioner%20Resource.pdf>)

Explore the myth of false memory syndrome, explaining that the "syndrome" was a construct of parents who had been accused of sexually abusing their daughter, and was taken up by accused abusers around the world to use as a defence, that it has not been accepted clinically as a valid defence, that the mechanism by which false memory is created as described by the proponents of the syndrome are not the mechanism children are exposed to, that recent cases have failed to use FMS in their defence; (<http://www.leadershipcouncil.org/1/res/dallam/6.html>)

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/sex-offender-loses-false-memory-syndrome-retrial-20140902-10bf2c.html>

Discuss other ways survivors and advocates are discredited,

Discuss some case studies, for example:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11062452/Rotherham-child-sex-scandal-watchdog-says-police-tried-to-disprove-victims.html>



<http://www.scriptonitedaily.com/2013/06/23/undercover-police-officers-licensed-to-rape-discredit-uk-citizens/>

http://laurelhouse.org.au/?page_id=36

<http://somesecrets.info/blog/2014/1/21/pedophiles-groom-both-the-child-and-the-family>

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/09/24/in-plain-view>

Discuss how “testimony” can become very circular, so that the perpetrator drops a hint or innuendo, then as it comes back to them in the community they can use subtle body language or tone to add credence to rumour that they themselves initiated. It can be humiliating to realise that we were conned by a perpetrator, and this fact can motivate members of the community to support the perpetrator rather than admit they may have made a mistake. Discuss the common and problematic phenomenon of victim blaming and victim discrediting by members of the Police Force, train staff to be assertive and objective in their statements, and warn them against being influenced by the investigating officers.

Discuss cognitive dissonance - it is more natural to blame a mother/victim, or decide that the victim is lying, because that means that the threat is limited to her family. If we accept that there are people of low conscience at large in the wider community who may target anyone then that is a threat to US and OUR family, so we are more likely to protect ourselves psychologically by convincing ourselves that it isn't so.

<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/sep/20/school-spot-signs-child-abuse>

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2008/10/19/fighting-cognitive-dissonance-the-lies-we-tell-ourselves/>

“The primary reason that the public is not sufficiently aware of child sexual abuse as a problem is that 73% of child victims do not tell anyone about the abuse for at least a year. 45% of victims do not tell anyone for at least 5 years. Some never disclose (Broman-Fulks et al., 2007).” (https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf) My children disclosed when they knew

the perpetrator had left the country. This delay in reporting is often used by perpetrators to claim that the victim/advocate/protective parent is lying to ‘get back at’ the perpetrator for ending the relationship/friendship.

5. **That in only 3% of REPORTED cases is there physical evidence to support the allegation;** discuss a table reflecting %s abused, disclosed, reported, investigated, judged and convicted. Discuss the high numbers of recidivism highlighting that if we choose to disbelieve one victim, the perpetrator will go on to abuse many more children.
6. **The extensive examination of recent research into children’s evidence found nothing to support the belief that children’s evidence is inherently less reliable than the evidence of adults.** (Davies, 2001)
7. **That many more children are abused than is reported: *The primary reason that the public is not sufficiently aware of child sexual abuse as a problem is that 73% of child victims do not tell anyone about the abuse for at least a year. 45% of victims do not tell anyone for at least 5 years. Some never disclose (Broman-Fulks et al., 2007).*** (https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf)

This is an opportunity to discuss reasons people fail to report, e.g. Concern that “the system” will do more harm than good, fear of retribution, fear of stigma, not sure of rights and obligations. Also why do people report? (In my case, both abusers began to stalk my family. I went to Police in fear for our safety, but the police response was unsatisfactory at best, it was abusive at worst)

According to research referenced by Bravehearts:

The most vulnerable ages for children to be exposed to sexual assault appears to be the ages from three to eight years of age, with the majority of onset of abuse happening between these ages (Browne & Lynch, 1994)

One in three girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused in some way before the age of 18 years. (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1993)

Let’s be really conservative and say that 51% is a majority. In a class of thirty 9 year old children (15 girls, 15 boys) at least four children in any class of nine year olds has already been sexually abused (statistically speaking) and may be being sexually abused throughout the year. Of course the same numbers apply and are increasing in classes of older age groups until we reach the statistic of 6 girls and two or three boys sexually abused in a class of 18 year old students.

Teachers must be reminded that they will want to believe that those children are not in their class, that those statistic children must be in another class, making it at least 8 children abused in the fictional “other” class. By clinging to the protection of cognitive dissonance teachers perpetuate abuse.

7. Only about 17% of reported sexual offences result in a conviction, a figure consistent with data from other States and overseas. (Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission, 2003) Some studies have found that **only 2% of adjudicated cases achieve a conviction**; discuss what it takes to achieve a conviction, the process, obstacles, experience of the family members and survivor
8. **That failure to achieve a conviction is due to a finding of not guilty in only 17% of cases**, discuss other reasons conviction is not achieved, discuss the role of school staff/community in the conviction process, e.g. discuss being objective in making notes, being cautious about being influenced by the accused or by their cohorts, avoiding gossip and slander, stepping in actively to stop gossip and slander about the victims.
9. **What are some risk factors?** (Despite fitting with the highest risk profile, staff and agencies continued to disbelieve my children and I) - single parent, single parent with live in partner, dysfunction in the family (refer narcissistic grandparents, narcissistic exes), gender, age. A victim does not have to fit the highest risk category. Every victim should be believed. Main predictor for child sex abuse is sociopathy, with a dysfunctional family setting coincidentally creating an environment that facilitates child sex abuse. (Refer *Parental Sociopathy as a Predictor of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Maker, Kemmelmeier and Peterson.*)
10. Discuss the school's capacity, role, and resources for supporting the mother (or caregiver) in creating a functional and chaos-free home environment. By chaos free we do not mean that the home is spotless and meal times are rigid. We mean an environment in which people are free to express themselves openly and honestly, that boundaries can be put in place (e.g. The parent is supported and confident to "put their foot down" when other adults attempt to undermine, interfere or dominate their parenting and household, that family members can be sure they feel safe and are assured that their needs will be met.).
11. **The role of the dysfunctional extended family**

Highlight that *Parental Sociopathy as a Predictor of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Maker, Kemmelmeier and Peterson* studies highlight that substance use and socio-economic status are not predictors of child abuse, but that sociopathy in a "parent" is the primary predictor, and that dysfunction in the family can create an environment that allows child sex abuse to occur. This is not to say that the mother knows the abuse is happening.

Specifically, in a broken family it is more likely that bruises on a child will not be easily explained, and are less likely to be explained (i.e. Did a bruise come from Mum's house? Dad's house? School?). It may be expected that a child from a broken home may behave "differently" and so unusual behaviours do not attract investigation or curiosity from care givers/parents.

- (<http://echorecovery.blogspot.com.au/2013/04/narcissist-grandma-and-your-children.html>)
- (<https://narcissisticmil.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/narcissistic-grandmothers-and-abusive-behaviour/>)
- (<http://www.daughtersofnarcissisticmothers.com/narcissistic-grandmothers/>)
- (<http://narcissistschild.blogspot.com.au/2014/09/the-scapegoats-children-narcissists.html>)
- (<http://www.deconstructingjezebel.com/narcissistic-grandparent-hell.html>)
- (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-legacy-distorted-love/201105/the-narcissistic-family-tree>)

In brief the narcissistic grandparent is charming, well presented, and seems to be full of concern. To the school staff they are likely to appear to be model grandparents. What staff do not see is that narcissistic grandparents typically have been emotionally abusive of the adult child (parent) since birth.

The narcissistic grandparent has created dysfunction that leaves the grandchildren vulnerable to sexual predators. The adult child fears legal action, and the relationship may be maintained only because there is a threat of a custody case if the adult child supervises or removes the grandparent's contact.

In this way statements, emails, actions by the grandparent that look innocent to the bystander are correctly interpreted by the adult child as a threat, designed to control and influence. For example an "invitation" to spend time at the park after school with the grandparent is actually an unspoken threat that if the adult child does not comply then the grandparent will initiate a custody case, or tell family and friends that the mother is an incompetent parent. Narcissistic grandparents need a thorough explanation because they can be responsible for teaching the grandchildren to keep secrets, for training the parent not to be protective, not to maintain safe boundaries, not to trust their instinct.

They could be causing great tension and dysfunction in the household, even from a great distance. They undermine the parent, giving the grandchildren the sense that their mother cannot protect them. Ironically the mother/protective parent may subsequently be accused of 'parentification'. The narcissistic grandparent may pressure the parent to act against their best judgement, for example pressuring the family for frequent grandparent time despite there already being a heavy schedule of school and contact with the estranged father.

The narcissistic grandparents are also highly motivated to discredit the adult child/ and or grandchild victim. While some narcissistic grandparents will neglect and ignore a grandchild, they can equally step in with the goal of securing custody of the grandchild without having grounds.

The narcissistic grandparent will step up at the time of disclosure to claim that the protective parent is incapable and somehow complicit. In fact the grandparent will typically have taught the grandchildren to keep secrets, that their mother cannot stand up to the grandparent and hence cannot protect the children from sexual predators either. The grandparent typically has created the very dysfunction in the family that allows sociopathic sexual predators to target and abuse the family. If in doubt, staff should check back with the protective parent for a true assessment of the grandparent. Staff should explain that they understand a bit about the dynamics of families with difficult grandparents. Staff should not take grandparent concerns and testimony at face value. For example in my case, my mother told others that I do not answer her phone calls (I did not have number recognition and so could not selectively ignore her calls) and that I denied her contact with my children (I have numerous emails in which I offered her access but she declined, preferring to establish contact with the fathers who failed to supervise her contact).

The grandparent will claim to be supportive of the protective parent, but investigation will show this to be untrue. For example, my mother offered to help move a fridge so that I would not involve a friend whom she disliked. When she arrived at the destination she said she couldn't help because she had a sore back, leaving me without the support I needed. On another occasion she had loaned me funds and chose to recall the loan when I experienced financial hardship, despite the fact I was making the agreed repayments. Her action compounded the financial difficulties. Of course she would tell others that she helped me to move a fridge, and loaned me money, conveniently leaving out the other significant component to the story.

While many are confident that there are "checks and balances" the victims of sexual assault and children of narcissistic parents know only too well that checks and balances frequently fail to protect. It is commonly testified that narcissistic parents will discredit their own child, going as far as falsely claiming the adult child to be mentally ill.

They do this because the child who is treated the worst, known as "the scapegoat child" may hurt enough to seek answers, and to learn about their family's dysfunction, and to attempt to educate others about the mental illness exhibited by the grandparent. It may be that the adult child simply chooses to supervise contact so that the grandparent is less able to undermine by comments to the grandchildren such as "you shouldn't have to do any washing up", "your mummy is bossy", "I'm going to take you away forever". If the adult child fails to play the narcissistic grandparent's game their way, they can expect to be actively discredited.

It has been a long known phenomenon that a narcissistic parent will have a child placed in a psychiatric institution if possible, as it will give them a great drama to relate to friends, gives them a sob story, and very thoroughly and conveniently

discredits the child. Precursors to such action can include subtle hints that the adult child is unstable, and amateur diagnoses of Aspergers, delusion, narcissism in the adult child.

The narcissistic grandparent is actually pressuring the protective parent, making them feel threatened, may have initiated custody cases against the parent as a way of abusing the parent, may involve Child protective Services, employ maternal alienation techniques which are inherently abusive of the grandchildren. A narcissistic grandparent is likely to be teaching the children to keep secrets. They contribute to the chaos in the family because they fill the mother with fear about custody and legal actions that are unfounded but nonetheless must be responded to, undermine her parenting which creates problem behaviour in the children, she often knows that the Grandparent behaviour is emotional abuse of herself and her children but cannot articulate how or why.

11. **What to expect of the victim;** there are no specific behaviours that are uniquely associated with having been abused. Signs of stress from other traumatic events can manifest as similar behaviours. There are books that include the stories of victims. Some of these stories should be shared in groups. Children who are abused often do especially well academically and in extra-curricular activities, partly because focus on something other than the abusive relationship/ environment is a way of “escaping reality”. If you were to notice anything, it may be that the child goes still and quiet if in what may be to them a stressful situation. I.e. Their “flight, fight, freeze” response kicks in easily. In only 3% of REPORTED cases is their physical evidence to confirm the allegation. Children have been known to draw pictures of monsters in their bedrooms, or to draw monsters in the role of the perpetrator, e.g. walking the dogs with grandpa becomes “me and the monster walking the dogs”. (Specific examples cited here.) Such drawings should be taken seriously and a protective parent notified. This may be enough evidence to confirm a protective parent’s suspicion and see the child protected.

12. Share statistics about people not believing the victim, not taking action.

Key Research Findings:

- *1 in 3 Australians would not believe children if they disclosed they were being abused*
- *1 in 5 lacked the confidence to know what to do if they suspected that a child was being abused or neglected*
- *90% of adults surveyed believed that the community needs to be better informed about the problem of child abuse in Australia*
- *Unless they come face to face with the issue, collectively Australians rate petrol prices, public transport and roads as issues of greater concern than*

child abuse

- 86% of Australian believed that Commonwealth and State Governments

should invest more money in protecting children from abuse and neglect. (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010)

-Bravehearts

Children rarely lie about or imagine sexual assault. In 98% of cases their statements are found to be true. (Dympna House, 1990) (https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats_updated141212.pdf)

13. **Lead an imaginary scenario designed to help people become aware of their thoughts and feelings and the development of cognitive dissonance.** “Lay on your back, breath deep, be peaceful, now imagine one of your students, a student who works hard, is polite and friendly. Sometimes they look a little sad, but then all children do at some stage. What age is the child? Notice how you feel as you watch them draw a picture of a tree. Now, imagine that child has tugged at your top and said “John hurts me when I go to bed”. Notice how you feel. Are you feeling tense? What are you thinking? Are you trying to think of what explanations there might be? Are you thinking you don’t have time to deal with this before class starts? Think back to that picture last week, of the monster standing next to the bed. How do you feel now when you think of that picture? Now you are in the staff room. You wonder if you should mention the comment to your Principal, or the school psychologist. How are you feeling? What are you thinking? Are you measuring how many minutes left until class time? You have noticed that the child’s mother has been a bit strange lately. Looks teary sometimes, looks a bit untidy. Does that make you think the child is more likely to be telling the truth? Or lying? Last week at the school BBQ John was open and chatty. He was well dressed. He’s a teacher too. Spoke fluently about curriculum and joked about time spent marking assignments after school. He works with your best mate as it turns out. Now notice what you are thinking, how you are feeling. You decide to speak with your friend. She says “oh, he’s alright. I think Beck is a bit of a nutter actually. She said something about him house sitting for me. He’s never house sat for me. Maybe she has a screw loose, who knows?” What are you thinking now? How do you feel? Are you more concerned? Maybe you are relieved? Maybe you think you will “wait and see”. After all, John looks like a decent fellow...
14. **Role model being proactive and assertive, countering discrediting of a victim with facts and statistics, and a solution.**
15. **The role of Cognitive Dissonance throughout the system;**
 - The family being groomed,
 - Not understanding the significance of signs,
 - Being uncomfortable about signs but not wanting to accuse without proof,

Community being groomed by the predator - not wanting to believe that such horrible things happen (cognitive dissonance)

The abuser presenting as victim,

It is less threatening to their own world to believe that the mother is capable of lying and whatever else the abuser accuses her of. If a woman does something to hurt her own children, she is a risk to her own children. If we accept that there are people who lack conscience and are incapable of empathy, then we acknowledge that we and our family members are at ongoing risk of being victims themselves, and that is too confronting to want to believe.

Discuss that we need a new narrative that acknowledges the existence of low conscience predators, share the facts and figures e.g. *There are an estimated 300 hard core paedophiles in Queensland. Each one of those may have sexually abused up to 150 children in their lifetime. Consequently, an estimated 45,000 Queensland children are expected to have been abused by this group. (Queensland Children's Commission, 1997)*(<https://www.bravehearts.org.au/files/Facts%20and%20Stats%20updated141212.pdf>)

The abuser may be from any cross section of society. People of low conscience (psychopaths with anti-social personality disorder) are typically intelligent and very well presented. They can rise to the top of their field (or several fields) quickly, enabling them to gain many skills that “get them in the door”. So a perpetrator may be a teacher, have martial arts skills (perfect for intimidating victims, and for gaining work as an instructor) and may have some handy-man skills, making them a handy prospect to a single Mum who lacks such skills.

Abusers tend to be drawn to positions of power or positions that give access to vulnerable people, so prison warden, teacher, police, nurse, politics, manager and others. They may have a long history of various criminal conduct but may or may not have been caught or convicted as yet. They are likely to be charismatic, and there is a good chance they are self confident and outgoing.

Over the time that you know the perpetrator they may be at any or all stages of the abuse cycle. i.e. While you know them they may be looking for a likely target (for example in the dating game), grooming the target's family (i.e. Showing that they are very supportive of the parents, or the child specifically, being public about being involved with the family or with the child, demonstrating their support by spending time with the family, doing chores for the family or spending money on them.

While the abuse is happening the perpetrator may be in the abuse process with one or more other victims. They may for example be abusing several children through their work or volunteering activities, or “dating” or indeed partnered with several single parents, or a combination of these. They may be observing a parent or child to assess their suitability as a target.

You may see small signs, for example you may see the perpetrator appearing intimate with someone other than the child's parent, or you may notice that they spend time with children in a way that makes you feel uneasy. You might see no signs.

This grooming that makes you feel uneasy is a form of sexual abuse and it is reportable. If you think "that is too good to be true" there is a good chance that there is a hidden motivation for the behaviour. Explore literature about grooming of child, family and community. explore a case study of a community that has been groomed and is ostracising the parent. www.thecasestudytas.com

Encourage discussion about what is and what is not part of the abuse process. (In my own case when I submitted an application for a restraint order against the 2010 perpetrator he went on to tell fire brigade members that I had written a letter saying that all the brigade members are child abusers, a year later I was heckled and verbally abused in public by members of the fire brigade and their families, people who were strangers to me. (Assessment, grooming, abuse, discrediting).

If the community does not act clearly to protect and validate the victim and family, the perpetrator may be filled with confidence, and go on to stalk the family, to place themselves in situations which give contact with the victim (walking past during lunch time and saying "hello" may seem innocent but it is a form of intimidation against the victim). They may slowly strengthen their relationship with the school community, finding ways to become involved at the school. This serves the perpetrator several purposes: it sends the victim the message that the perpetrator is beyond the law, untouchable; it opens new avenues for recruiting targets/future victims, it works to ostracise and alienate the victim and their advocates/family, and it serves to increase the integrity of the perpetrator.

Know that "Working with children checks" are very limited in their efficacy: refer Royal Commission findings. Only those who have been reported/convicted are refused the card. The Working with children card gives a false sense of security, and typically institutions do not put in place the broad safety measures required to ensure the safety of children.

16. Highlight the importance of trusting instinct, and that to trust instinct is perhaps the most valuable advice a parent or staff members can be given.
17. **What to expect of the protective parent;** note that the protective parent will have been groomed, and may have been seduced by or assaulted by the abuser. Strive to have a trained survivor attending training sessions to contribute to the conversation with confidence.

I can speak from my own experience, and from testimony from dozens of other survivors, and from reading research in all areas that I have raised. When I discovered that my

children had been abused I felt incredibly sad. I thought that they had been broken, and that I was somehow responsible.

I did not know that my children had been abused at the time. I had thought they were safe because I am a light sleeper. What I did not know is that I was being drugged with over the counter tablets that are commonly found in homes. They were put in fizzy drinks, meals and hot drinks. When I woke after having been drugged I was in a “brain fog”, so even if I noticed a ‘sign’ such as the bathroom being inexplicably wet, I was likely to not register the significance, and forget about the sign by midday.

Upon disclosure I immediately told staff at the school as cryptically and discretely as possible. They did not give me a private space in which to speak. I did my best to stay calm so as not to upset the staff member and any person who may have noticed our conversation. I was likely in shock. I assumed that the staff had had some training. I guess they had not, but did not tell me so. They later reported my behaviour as evidence that the abuse did not happen, because they did not understand how trauma can exhibit.

At the start of the new school year we had a new principal. I told her briefly about the abuse, because my children were fragile again. Staff repeatedly seemed unaware of how the children and I may be affected, and offered no support, no empathy, and no strategies for supporting my children and I through this traumatic time.

18. Train about trauma response and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in victims, protective parents and advocates. These are commonly misdiagnosed and misunderstood.

19. What to expect from the community It is necessary to cut contact with the accused firmly and without explanation. The abuser knows what they did wrong. They will not admit it. Explanation will be hijacked by the perpetrator to discredit the victim. The abuser will have been discrediting the victim and advocates/ family long before the child discloses. Community members will react differently depending on: how well they know the victim and family, if they have been groomed by the abuser, if the perpetrator has successfully discredited the victim to them. Zero contact is essential with a perpetrator if we are to avoid being groomed to support them in discrediting a witness. Community members may find it easier to believe the perpetrator than to deal with the complicated politics of being impartial.

In our case the perpetrator attended community committees etc. that I was involved with, and created conflict with me at every opportunity. I have been heckled by strangers who called out the abuser’s name as a “calling card”. They don’t know that he has lied to them to make himself look like the victim. Education would help. Over time I felt ostracised by the community, and can only guess at what the abuser has told staff and friends in order that they increasingly are cold toward me. If they knew how hard working and resourceful I am they would hold me up as a hero.

20. **How to respond to those** Be assertive. Question any denigration of the victim and family. If you think a comment may be denigration but it is not clear cut, be assertive and seek clarity: “When you said that she doesn’t work, are you saying that she is not a valuable member of our community, or are you saying that you are impressed by her resourcefulness and her commitment to raising her children?” “When you say she lives in a shed, are you aware that she designed and built the home. That’s a very resourceful, but it may have made her vulnerable to a sexual predator.” Name body language: “When you rolled your eyes I thought maybe you were suggesting that she is crazy. Perhaps we should not be quick to judge people who have suffered trauma. They are the experts on what it is like to go through these things.”
21. While the parent may have friends on staff or in the community who feel that they are an authority on what actually happened, in fact they are highly likely to have been subtly groomed by the perpetrator in order to discredit the victim and, potentially, to they may have been a potential target themselves. Due to this they are not impartial, may damage the healing of family members, may contribute to system abuse, and may also have something valuable to offer if educated appropriately about the manifestation of childhood sexual abuse.
22. Discussion about the fact that statistics vary from region to region, and between parameters and definitions and methods used, e.g. Discuss various definitions of “allegation unfounded”.
23. Discuss the fallibility of the system, (refer to Royal Commission case studies) the prevalence of corruption, a history of corruption in the system, and the tendency of abusers to “brain wash” the system.
24. Discuss how the abuser uses the community, family and system to discredit the victim and to elude conviction.

25. What to expect from the victim

In our case, my daughters were 18 months (██████) and 4 years (██████) when they were first abused by a family friend. (██████) (names changed to protect identity) could be quite outgoing at home, loved to wander around naked, and even wanted to play in the snow naked one winter. She liked to flash her bum at family members to antagonise them. (██████) could be quite self-sufficient, helping herself to snacks and spending long periods of time being creative. At school (██████) was quiet. She had a good friend she had known since infancy. Both girls were very quiet. Staff repeatedly told me that (██████) was very quiet in the classroom, but on one occasion the Principal (██████) spontaneously reassured me that (██████) could be quite social in the playground. By the age of 7 (██████) had made a new good friend, and could assess and discriminate between healthy friendships and unhealthy friendships; her previous friend, daughter of one of the teachers, was prone to lying about trespasses from other children. With a strong sense of Justice, (██████)

refused to play with her most of the time, and spoke up in defence of others if she had witnessed events that were lied about.

■■■■ has always been a very generous, thoughtful girl. She always took pride in helping with chores, though it is not something we have focussed on in our household. I have learned Nonviolent Communication (the language of empathy) which focusses on feelings and needs, and striving to meet the needs of all, so chores were something that were done by choice, not duress. At school ■■■■ had several friends, experienced the same politicking as ■■■■ had, and developed for herself the same policy of honesty and integrity. For example in August 2015 at the Contact Centre ■■■■ told me that a teacher had labelled a student a “queen of put down” (not something I would encourage from the teacher) and indeed that student tended to be quite nasty to others, and had taken to dictating whom may befriend whom. ■■■■ told me that because of that she chose to play with the child who had been ostracised. I think the girls have learned from our own experiences of ostracism by our family and community.

Both girls excel academically.

26. Teach Marshall Rosenberg’s NonViolent Communication to staff, students and the school community, offer it to the wider community

NVC has a positive impact on all relationships. It teaches the language of empathy, so that staff know how to respond immediately to disclosure. When taught in depth NVC teaches how to set boundaries and when that may be appropriate. There is a significant portion of the community that, due to having been raised by abusive, neglectful or strict parents have trouble setting boundaries, so this would be very valuable in making them less vulnerable to sexual predators and narcissistic grandparents.

The limitation of NVC is that the participants must be honest. Refer to the connections between low conscience, child abuse, family violence and recidivism. **A person of low conscience will use the NVC user’s honesty to their advantage, gleaming tips that will help in grooming and abuse.** This must be included in NVC communication. Note that NVC communities in general are slow to acknowledge this weakness as they like to think that NVC is infallible. The weakness does bring the strength though, that a person who practices NVC can become very good at identifying persons of low conscience due to their reluctance to meet the needs of anyone other than themselves.

27. Discuss the many myths about child sex abuse, and how abusers have fed many of these myths, for example:”men only abuse if the adult partner is ‘not putting out’. In fact some prolific abusers also have a healthy sexual life with their adult partner and may be abusing several children as well as having casual and more long term extra marital affairs. A child who was told by her abuser that she protected her sister from him by “letting him touch her” may have grown up thinking that abusers only abuse one child at a time. Unless we understand how clever abusers

can be at taking opportunities or being secretive, we can mistakenly believe the mother must have known. In fact most abuse happens while the mother is asleep. Increasingly we are aware that mothers are being drugged with very effective over the counter drugs so that she sleeps through the abuse. refer to “you and your child” for more myths busted. There are lots of myths about sexual abuse. Some of these myths place the blame for the abuse on the child, some blame the mother, some take all the responsibility away from the abuser. Some myths say that sexual abuse is more common because of the decline of morals in our society and others say that, in some cultures, sexual abuse is okay. There are other myths that say sexual abuse is just a loving relationship between an adult and a child. We need to look further at these myths to help us to understand them. These myths may have been created to help explain behaviour which is very difficult to explain. The effects of these myths may be that the victim of the abuse is blamed and the abuser remains free of guilt.

D: educational booklet ideas - for children, for parents/ advocates

A booklet that could be provided to parents and advocates by school staff and other service providers upon disclosure/reporting to staff/school community

Include the “you and your child” publication: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/581786/You-and-your-child_0813.pdf

A list of local service providers e.g. SASS, counselling service, dedicated police unit, specialist doctors (perhaps have a pocket in the booklet cover, the local contacts can be printed and folded and inserted into the pocket)

Realistic description of what to expect from yourself, your child, and others

Be honest and realistic by include explanations of discrediting, grooming (of child, family and community), and cognitive dissonance

Reading list

Useful websites

An explanation of the relationship between the low conscience disorders and child abuse as well as vulnerability of families, recognising that good parents can have chaotic and hence vulnerable families due to victimisation by problematic grandparents, ex partners etc. (see next section).

For children:

Children should be provided with a booklet with say six pages strategically chosen from the “Finding Sunshine after the Storm” workbook, which allows them to express themselves and explore their true self, to gain confidence and a sense of self.

Booklet should include three diverse stories of other children who have been abused, as well as some child abuse statistics with the goal of letting children know that they are not alone without minimising their own experience.

Positive messages, the goal being to encourage healthy expression of emotions, to head off depression, self blame and suicidal ideation.

Include some helpline phone numbers

The book could be available for children who are curious or who may have been abused but not disclosed, discrete but readily available. It is not for staff to decide which children have been abused, or which children need support.

E: research and implications

I refer the Royal Commission to “Working with maternal alienation in domestic/family violence and child sexual abuse” (<http://www.ncsmc.org.au/wsas/Documents/Practitioner%20Resource.pdf>) and “Maternal Alienation Project project report” (<https://apps.aifs.gov.au/cfcaregister/projects/864>) by Anne Morris of the Maternal Alienation project.

I bring these publications to you because as a mother of survivors I can confirm that Anne’s publications offer excellent insight into the experience of survivors, and highlights best practice to address short falls that I can confirm are rife within Tasmania’s support services and government agencies.

The following publications illustrate clearly the relevance of the issues raised above:

Grandparents are not all created equal by Karen Stephens

<http://www.easternflorida.edu/community-resources/child-development-centers/parent-resource-library/documents/grandparents-not-created-equal.pdf>

There is little literature that touches accurately on the chaotic influence of a narcissistic parent on a family and grandchildren. This does that, but for a more thorough picture of the way narcissistic grandparents are making their grandchildren vulnerable to sexual predators see some forums:

- (<http://echorecovery.blogspot.com.au/2013/04/narcissist-grandma-and-your-children.html>)
- (<https://narcissisticmil.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/narcissistic-grandmothers-and-abusive-behaviour/>)
- (<http://www.daughtersofnarcissisticmothers.com/narcissistic-grandmothers/>)
- (<http://narcissistschild.blogspot.com.au/2014/09/the-scapegoats-children-narcissists.html>)
- (<http://www.deconstructingjezebel.com/narcissistic-grandparent-hell.html>)
- (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-legacy-distorted-love/201105/the-narcissistic-family-tree>)

“Working with maternal alienation in domestic/family violence and child sexual abuse” by Anne Morris

<http://www.ncsmc.org.au/wsas/Documents/Practitioner%20Resource.pdf>

Articulates the mechanisms of abuse inflicted via parental alienation, a form of child abuse that can be perpetuated by the system. Grandparents and Sexually abusive parents can be guilty of this mode of abuse. School communities can unwittingly participate.

Illustrates how this emotional abuse makes the parent and children vulnerable. (Grandparents are capable of parental alienation and so can be substituted for “the abusive father” throughout this document. Mothers can also be capable of parental alienation however much literature on that specific phenomenon fails to acknowledge the very real fears of women from abusive relationships that a person who has abused her may have abused or may intend to abuse her children.) The accusation that a mother is alienating the father is known to be used by lawyers to ultimately secure custody for the father and to alienate the mother.

Survivor forums provide accurate insight into the mechanics by which a grandparent of low conscience alienates one or both parents. Remember: Survivors are experts.

Parental Sociopathy as a Predictor of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Maker, Kimmelmeier and Peterson

<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/44911>

Found that the predominant predictor of childhood sexual abuse in the sample is sociopathy in a parent. The key learnings from this are that:

- socio-economic background and substance abuse do not feature highly as predictors;
- family dysfunction can create an environment which makes a family vulnerable to child abuse
- raises the possibility that family dysfunction makes adult children and hence grandchildren vulnerable to sociopaths (remembering that emotionally abusive grandparents can create chaos and dysfunction in the family unit). **This brings the actions of narcissistic grandparents under the spotlight as a key predictor of childhood sexual abuse.**
- raises the possibility that if sociopathy is the predictor, the status of the perpetrator as parent may not be a relevant factor, that is that any sociopath who has access to a child or family poses risk of child abuse (go figure!!!!)

Without conscience by Robert Hare

<http://www.amazon.com/Without-Conscience-Disturbing-World-Psychopaths/dp/1572304510>

A thorough exploration of psychopathy and how it manifests within relationships and the community at large

- Note that there is a high rate of recidivism among those of low conscience, and that they are generally not considered rehabilitatable.
- Note that victims of those of low conscience are likely to present for mental/emotional health support, however those with low conscience disorder are not capable of reflection or insight (narcissistic personality disorder) or simply do not care (anti-social

personality disorder) or do have insight and are somewhat proud of their status of psychopath or sociopath (ASPD-Psychopathy), a “diagnosis” that is being represented as desirable by modern popular media such as Sherlock and Dr Who and so do not present for assessment and treatment.

- Note that those with low conscience tend to “rise to the top” which results in a higher percentage of those disorders among corporation, politicians and managers. They are also drawn to roles with vulnerable people just as empaths are, so that there are a higher percentage of low conscience disorder staff among our health care, psychiatric, child care, aged care and education and police employees.

Research by Nigel Blackwood (and cohorts) of Kings’s College London’s Institute of psychiatry regarding psychopathy, empathy and brain imaging

[https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/nigel-blackwood\(c81032d6-3276-4f26-8a11-4dfdc74088d5\)/publications.html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/nigel-blackwood(c81032d6-3276-4f26-8a11-4dfdc74088d5)/publications.html)

- Found evidence of structural abnormality in the brains of men convicted of rape, murder and violent assaults. The study showed that psychopaths, who are characterised by a lack of empathy, had less grey matter in the areas of the brain important for understanding other peoples' emotions.
- While cognitive and behavioural treatments may benefit people with anti-social personality disorders, the same approach may not work for psychopaths with brain damage, Blackwood said.
- Has implications for the investigation of reports of assault and abuse,
- and has implications for the management or treatment of offenders.

The science of the art of Psychotherapy by Dr Allan Schore

<http://www.allanschore.com>

<http://www.amazon.com/Science-Psychotherapy-Norton-Interpersonal-Neurobiology/dp/0393706648>

Explains why emphasis of intervention must be on support of the mother rather than on removal of the child to a perceived safe environment. Explores appropriate interventions that support the mother and child as a unit. Describes the essential part played by the mother in the development of the right hemisphere of the brain particularly during the third trimester and first three years. No other adult can give the infant the reciprocal right hemisphere to right hemisphere interaction that is so essential to normal brain development.

Iain McGilchrist, The Master and his Emissary

Submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Issue 9, Risk of child sexual abuse in schools

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Master-His-Emissary-Divided/dp/0300188374>

Explains how trauma and our man made environment are increasingly stimulating a dominant left hemisphere, and why that is bad news. See The Divided Brain on Ted Talks online. https://www.ted.com/talks/ian_mcgilchrist_the_divided_brain

Russel Meares; A Dissociation model of Borderline Personality Disorder

<http://www.amazon.com/Dissociation-Borderline-Personality-Interpersonal-Neurobiology/dp/0393705854>

Australian research, relating to trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and hence treatment of survivors, how survivors present.

The Silencing Response in Clinical Practice: On the Road to Dialogue; Anna B Baranowsky

- Explores tendency to misdiagnose Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (common in survivors) as a chronic mental illness such as schizophrenia or assessment as delusion.
- A phenomenon that perpetuates system abuse and parental alienation as well as emotional abuse of children by disbelieving or mistaken professionals and service providers.
- When survivors are disbelieved and told they imagined the abuse they experience a whole new level of abuse, perpetrated by the system. This adds a new level of vulnerability and consequential risk to the children.

Final note - as a survivor who has been “through the system” in [REDACTED] since 2010 I can testify that the publications above represent accurate insight into child abuse. Sadly I can also testify that the learnings of the above publications are not incorporated by [REDACTED] service providers and government agencies to an extent that allows for satisfactory support of victims and their advocates. The recommendations of the above publications are largely missing from [REDACTED] practice. I firmly believe that that must be of high priority if the state is to have any impact on domestic violence and childhood sexual abuse in this and future generations.

[REDACTED]