

## **CHA response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on the Consultation Paper – Records & Recordkeeping Practices, September 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on the Consultation Paper – Records & Recordkeeping Practices, September 2016.

Children's Healthcare Australasia (CHA) is the peak body for hospitals and health services providing health care to neonates, children, adolescents and young people across Australasia. We support over 90 members who are responsible for over 400,000 paediatric separations within Australasia each year. CHA works to enhance the health and wellbeing of neonates, children, adolescents & young people through supporting children's hospitals and health services to achieve excellence in clinical care. We achieve this through advocacy, benchmarking performance, networking to share information and expertise, and through clinical forums and webinars.

The Consultation Paper – Records & Recordkeeping Practices, September 2016 was circulated to all member hospitals. The following suggestions reflect the collated feedback from members.

CHA members welcome the deep level of consideration that is being given to records and record keeping practices through this consultation process. We suggest a number of strategies to improve record keeping. They are:

As a priority legislation needs to be passed to mandate national standards for record keeping that will apply to all human services organisations.

A key priority is record keeping for volunteers. CHA members suggest that all persons who are engaged as volunteers should have a record of their volunteer engagement established. This record should contain:

- The term of the persons engagement, specifically outlining the date of initial engagement and the date of retirement, resignation or dismissal of the volunteer. If the person was asked to resign or was dismissed, details of this should be held on the record.
- Copies of documents used to confirm identity.
- Copies of police checks and working with children check documentation.
- Information on the in-service education that the person has undertaken during the term of their employment/engagement.
- Information relating to adverse events or complaints about the person, the investigation undertaken and the resolution of these complaints, if any.

These records should be subject to the same record keeping practices as other employees within the organisation. It should be mandatory that these records be retained, by law, when sexual abuse is reported or suspected.

It should be mandatory for all employees and volunteers working within health and human services organisations to report any charges made, or convictions, for abuse, assault, or sexual abuse that occur during the term of their employment/ engagement.

In relation to universal service provision (provision of services from across the spectrum of health and human services organisations); it should be mandatory to:

- Conduct family/other violence screening at the point of first contact with universal service providers. Should contact with the provider be long term (occurring over many months or years) then protocols should be established to regularly screen for family/other violence.
- For this to occur organisations need to educate their staff on how to ask question about, and how to respond appropriately to, reports of family/other violence.
- Standard protocols should be established to ensure all appropriate authorities are notified in the instance of a report of family/other violence.
- Standardised documentation should be developed to collect information pertaining to child sexual abuse.

When a report of sexual abuse is made; records of interviews with the child and with others associated with the care of the child should be created and maintained. These need to be flagged so they are not destroyed as a part of the organisations regular record destruction practices.

A separate body should be established to hold records that potentially relate to child sexual abuse. Copies of any record relating to child sexual abuse should be transferred to this body.

That records relating to actual or potential child sexual abuse should be held by the separate body, but also be accessible to appropriately authorised persons. Strict protocols should be in place to ensure these people are authorised to access the record.

That the separate body would have the ability to link records for the purpose of investigating child sexual abuse. That where linkages between records are found, that they would be appropriately reported and investigated.

That records of actual or potential abuse be held by this separate body for a period of 99 years from their receipt.

That freedom of information provisions be established to ensure appropriate accessibility of these records.



Further comment can be obtained by contacting our CEO utilising the details listed below.

**Contact details:**

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