

Professional Standards Newsletter

ISSUE 03 - December 2012



Someone to love

Before I moved to Brisbane I worked for a church in the centre of Sydney. Each year when the almost life size nativity setting was installed near the front doors we would order an extra box of baby dolls because each year the baby Jesus would be stolen from the manger many times over.

The nativity setting was really beautiful, quite old, wonderful rich robes and jewelled crowns on the three kings, the serene and beautiful Mary, stern Joseph standing guard, sparkly angels and lots of cuddly sheep. Financially quite valuable items yet the ordinary plastic baby wrapped in a scrap of blanket -yes they stole the blanket too - was nicked time and again.

Who were these brazen criminals? They were the most vulnerable people right at the bottom of society's hierarchy, the old and lonely who wandered in most days to have somewhere to be rather than watching TV in their tiny Department of Housing bedsits, they were the city's rough sleepers who bedded down each night in the doorways and shopfronts of the city streets, the sad and forlorn, the chronically mentally ill, the addicted and confused.

I don't know why these people nicked a simple plastic doll wrapped in a scrap of flannelette because our security guard chose not to chase them,

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Workshops - 2012

Nundah
Mt Gravatt
Dalby
Bundaberg
Eight Mile Plains
Crows Nest
Milton
Toowoomba
Rosewood
Alberton
Redcliffe
Coolum
Tallebudgera
Kulpi
Gatton
Caloundra
Eight Mile Plains
Eight Mile Plains (Youth)

it seemed easier to simply replace the baby Jesus in his manger. I like to think that for these very fragile people a simple plastic baby Jesus was someone for them to love and allowed them to feel God's love for them.

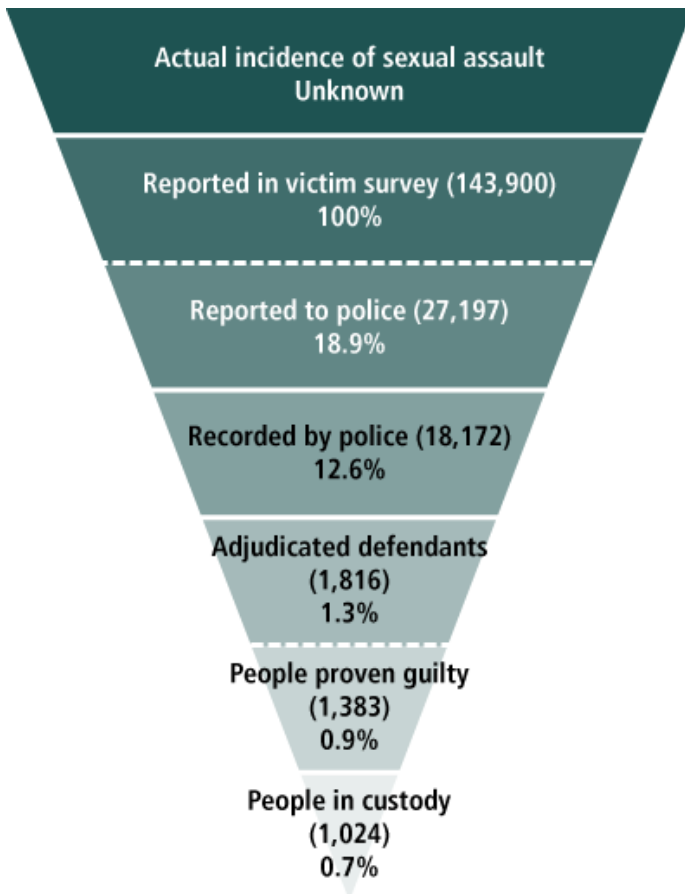
My very wise old grandmother used to say that each baby brought its love with it. The baby Jesus brought immeasurable love with Him for all of us and it is this love we celebrate with joy at Christmas.

For those of us who are privileged to have family and friends who love us and whom we love in return, let us never forget the very vulnerable on the fringes of society who take comfort from a simple plastic doll nicked from the nativity scene.

My blessings for a loving, joyful and peaceful Christmas

Liz Crawford

Professional Standards Director



The diagram on the left comes from recent research by Dr Karen Gelb in 2007. Her paper is called "Recidivism of Sex Offenders" and can be found here

http://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sites/sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/files/recidivism_of_sex_offenders_research_paper.pdf

This paper also quotes these interesting facts which come from a study in 2004 in NSW:

- 37.9% of offenders were sentenced more than 10 years after the offence occurred;
- 28.9% of offenders were sentenced more than 15 years after the offence occurred;
- 18.2% of offenders were sentenced more than 20 years after the offence occurred; and
- 9.4% of offenders were sentenced more than 25 years after the offence occurred.

Let's continue to be welcoming and inclusive but remain alert and observant.

How to win an argument

Mark 9:30-37

This is on my list of Bible stories I don't like. It starts off fine. As the disciples stroll down the road following Jesus they liven things up by discussing (though some use the word 'arguing') who's the greatest. As a 'slightly competitive person I don't have much of a problem with these sorts of conversations. Though it's also a little kinder to think of them as harmless "one-upmanship" stuff.

I mean why didn't Jesus just join in with a little of his real greatness. No human could argue with the greatness Jesus could display at the snap of his fingers! He could move a mountain on the horizon a few kilometres to the south and simply say "Now that clearly makes ME the 'greatest'".

I mean this is the way it's supposed to work – just ask any army. If you want to defeat an enemy misusing their power, you simply use greater power. If you want to win over strength you use more strength. If you want to defeat a show of intelligence, squash it with a display of superior intelligence. Everyone knows that!

But, and this is the really annoying bit, Jesus refuses to play our games! Even though he could have put them firmly in their place, Jesus picks up a child and says, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Why a child? Was it their innocence, their sweetness, their lack of competitiveness? No, for the history of the world, excluding only the last hundred or so years, children have represented the vulnerable in society. Instead of reaching for power, strength, or even rightness or truth, Jesus trumps our desire for greatness with vulnerability. He answers our adoration of power with weakness. He comes as a helpless babe in a manger, dies as a weak and defeated criminal on a cross, and here in this story he closely identifies himself, his Father, and his church, with a vulnerable child as a sign of what his new kingdom is all about. It's here in vulnerability that God himself can be found.

Response

If you find an interesting article or are alerted to some new research, please send the details to us so that if it is appropriate we can share it with others.

We'd love to hear from you

This Christmas may the love, gentleness and vulnerability of the Christ Child swamp our human desire to defeat, dominate, and control.

Pastor Keith

Biggest in the
land.

Queensland wins
again!



Prevention of Risk of Harm from a Known Sex Offender Policy

For your information here is the text of the second draft of the LCAQD policy. The whole document has already been distributed for comment. Please don't hesitate to email keith.stiller@qld.lca.org.au if you would like to see the whole documentation or make a comment.

“The Church is committed to ensuring that our children and other vulnerable people are kept safe from harm and that systems for the prevention of harm to children and other vulnerable people are maintained. Accordingly the Church requires that until such time as a Risk Assessment has been undertaken and Management Plan has been approved by the Church any person with a known history of inappropriate or illegal sexual conduct is excluded from participation in any activity of the church which involves or could involve children or other vulnerable people.”

Child Grooming

The following article comes from Wikipedia. Search for “child grooming” if you want to see the article in full.

“Child grooming involves psychological manipulation in the form of positive reinforcement and foot-in-the-door tactics, using activities that are typically legal but later lead to illegal activities. This is done to gain the child's trust as well as the trust of those responsible for the child's well-being. Additionally, a trusting relationship with the family means the child's parents are less likely to believe potential accusations.

To establish a good relationship with the child and the child's family, child groomers might do several things. For example, they might take an undue interest in someone else's child, to be the child's “special” friend to gain the child's trust. They might give gifts or money to the child for no apparent reason (toys, dolls, etc.). They may show pornography—videos or pictures—to the child, hoping to make it easy



Child Grooming (cont)

for the child to accept such acts, thus normalizing the behaviour. They may simply talk about sexual topics. These are just some of the methods a child groomer might use to gain a child's trust and affection to allow them to do what they want. Hugging and kissing or other physical contact, even when the child does not want it, can happen.

They may try to gain the child's parents' trust by befriending them, with the goal of easy access to the child. The child groomer might look for opportunities to have time alone with the child. This can be done by offering to babysit. The groomer may invite the child for sleepovers. “

Here's part of an article on the recent sexual abuse of Jimmy Savile in England from the Guardian Newspaper:

“It's part of the grooming process to persuade the victim it's wrong to think badly of the abuser. In that respect, **Jimmy Savile groomed the nation**. Children rarely said the emperor was naked – sometimes all too literally. But even when one did, the cry was never taken up. Adults also kept their suspicions quiet, even when they were strong. It seemed wrong to think badly of Savile, though many secretly did.

It's telling, this collective failure to point at Savile and suggest he was just the scary, child-catching creature of nightmare he appeared to be. People tend to believe what's easier to bear. Sadly it's easier for a child to bear the idea that they deserve abuse than it is for them to believe the adult world does not protect the innocent.”

The answer to grooming isn't “fear”, it's being aware and alert to this sort of behaviour.

What you can do

- Encourage your child to have a confident approach in life. Celebrate the anniversary of their Baptism as the day God called them by name as his own.
- Know who your child is with; this is important.
- Talk to your child and teach him or her about touching (not just sexual touching). This helps in educating about appropriate behaviour. Children need to know that their bodies belong to them alone.
- Educate your child about the importance of telling you about any physical contact with others.
- Trust your gut instinct; if you have a sense that something is not right, don't ignore it.

(Adapted from Relationships Australia—Victoria)

Check out the “Bravehearts” website!

Workshops Statistics

This year 18 Professional Standards Workshops were held in the Queensland District, reaching 321 people. In the last three years a total of almost 1200 people have been trained in 52 workshops.

For SMO Coordinators

Very shortly I'll be sending you all an email about the latest developments with SMO. This will include Coordinators once again being able to enter people into the system. There will also be help videos on each page, showing you how to use that page.

Planning a Workshop

If your congregation is interested in hosting a workshop in 2013 please check out the LCAQD website.



Response

We'd love to hear from you.

Please tell us what changes have occurred in your congregation since you have attended the Professional Standards Workshop.

Send us a quick [email](#) sharing those things that have worked well and those that still need more work.

Have we made a difference?

A very blessed Christmas to all!

May the Babe of Bethlehem fill you with his powerful vulnerability.

Liz, Kate, Keith

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Our aim is to produce two short newsletters a year for those who attend our Queensland Workshops. If you don't wish to receive this newsletter please email keith.stiller@qld.lca.org.au