



National Child
Protection
Clearinghouse

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION Newsletter

PUBLISHED BY THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES

VOL.9 NO.1 WINTER 2001



Ultimately, it is about ensuring that our children have the best possible start. There couldn't be a better motivator than that.

Audit of child abuse prevention programs launched

"The Government sees strong, well-functioning families as the cornerstone of our society, and we recognise that children are our nation's most precious resource."

With these words, on 28 March 2001, the Federal Minister for Community Services, the Hon Larry Anthony, launched two child abuse prevention initiatives. The first was the *Choose with Care* kit developed by ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), designed to prevent child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, from occurring in different kinds of children's services. The second initiative launched was the National Child Protection Clearinghouse report *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: Findings from an Australian Audit of Prevention Programs*, by Adam M. Tomison and Liz Poole, published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Eighteen months in the making, the Audit represents the most comprehensive attempt to describe the state of the nation in this field, and is the most recent in an ongoing series of audits of child abuse prevention programs that have been conducted at the Clearinghouse. It was developed in order to provide an overview of child abuse prevention initiatives currently being undertaken nationally; to identify trends and any gaps in service provision; to identify programs from which service providers can learn, and thus avoid duplicating program development; and to generate discussion of future directions in child abuse prevention and the promotion of child and family wellbeing.

The findings of the Audit provide evidence of the development of a strong foundation of child abuse prevention activity across the nation. Importantly, the development and operation of prevention initiatives was associated not only with large government departments or non-government agencies, but with "grass roots" community groups or small agencies. ➤

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The National Child Protection Clearinghouse at the Australian Institute of Family Studies serves as an interchange point for information, research and initiatives supporting work in the field of child abuse/neglect prevention.

The Clearinghouse is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, under the auspices of the National Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

Views expressed in Clearinghouse publications are those of individual authors and may not necessarily reflect Clearinghouse or Institute policy.

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Designed by Double Jay Graphic Design
Printed by XL Printing
ISSN 1320-2871

Print Post Approved PP349181/00604

Audit launch continued

Minister Anthony praised the Audit, noting that: "The development of an effective child abuse prevention strategy requires governments to be well informed about the state of child abuse prevention activity, and to learn from what has already been achieved. This Audit is the first attempt to map child abuse prevention initiatives in Australia, and provides a baseline by which we will measure activity and progress in the future . . . I'm happy to say that the findings of the Audit provide evidence of a strong foundation of child abuse prevention activity across the country . . . And I can assure you that the report will also go a long way in influencing the future directions of government policies to prevent child abuse."

The Audit reflects the volatility of the child abuse prevention field and the rapidly changing nature of service provision, identifying a number of clear policy and service delivery trends.

It also provides some evidence of the professional recognition of the benefits of interagency and cross-sectoral collaborations in the prevention of a variety of social ills, including child maltreatment. This was most clearly demonstrated by the increased acceptance to address the "totality" of violence present in families – that is, to prevent child maltreatment and domestic violence.

The Audit, and the resultant National Child Abuse Prevention Programs database, which provides detailed information on all programs included in the Audit, provide an effective means of describing the state of the nation in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The complete *Child Abuse Prevention Programs database* is able to be searched via the internet on the Clearinghouse and Australian Institute of Family Studies homepages at: <http://www.aifs.org.au/na2.htm>.

The Clearinghouse is currently giving consideration to undertaking further National Audits of child abuse prevention programs as a means of monitoring progress and of identifying changes, issues and trends in child abuse prevention across Australia.

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: Findings from an Australian Audit of Prevention Programs, by Adam M. Tomison and Liz Poole, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000 (208 pages).

Copies of the Audit report have been forwarded to all agencies and individuals who contributed material to the Audit. If you have not received your copy, please contact Clearinghouse Project Officer Ellen Fish at the Institute: (03) 9214 7862. Copies of the report are also available on request to the Institute or can be downloaded (gratis) at: <http://www.aifs.org.au/nch/pubs/auditreport.html>.

Institute awarded Clearinghouse tender

The Federal Minister for Community Services, the Hon Larry Anthony, took the opportunity of the launch of the Clearinghouse National Audit Report on 28 March 2001 to announce that the Australian Institute of Family Studies had recently been awarded the tender to host the National Child Protection Clearinghouse for a further three (and possibly six) years.

The staff of the Clearinghouse would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who sent letters in support of our tender application. We would also like to express our gratitude to the many people and agencies who contribute their views and feedback which enables us to meet the changing needs of our members and to improve and expand the Clearinghouse repertoire of services.