

STAKEHOLDER FORUMS – October 2018

Supporting a Child Safe and Child Friendly Canberra



LISTENING REPORT

THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Supporting a child safe and child friendly Canberra

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) was established in 2013, in response to allegations of sexual abuse of children in institutional contexts that had been emerging in Australia for many years. The Royal Commission handed down its Final Report in December 2017.

In June 2018, the ACT Government released its formal [response](#) to the Royal Commission. The response outlines the ACT Government's commitment to work with the community to keep children and young people safe and protect them from harm. Of the 307 recommendations for the ACT Government, 290 were accepted or accepted in principle, and 17 were noted or taken under further consideration.

THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Making institutions safer for children

The Royal Commission recommended that institutions uphold the rights of the child. Recommendations focus on preventing sexual abuse and making institutions safer for children and young people through the implementation of [Child Safe Standards](#). The Child Safe Standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children and young people from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. The ten Child Safe Standards are:

- **Standard 1:** Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
- **Standard 2:** Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- **Standard 3:** Families and communities are informed and involved
- **Standard 4:** Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
- **Standard 5:** People working with children are suitable and supported
- **Standard 6:** Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused
- **Standard 7:** Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
- **Standard 8:** Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- **Standard 9:** Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- **Standard 10:** Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

THE CONVERSATION

Stakeholder Forums – 16 and 17 October 2018

The ACT Government is working toward understanding how best to implement Child Safe Standards in the ACT.

On 16 and 17 October 2018, stakeholders were invited to participate in two ACT Government forums facilitated by the ACT Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook.

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The forums helped the ACT Government to understand how it can support organisations to strengthen their approaches to protecting children and young people, and provide safe environments for children and young people to live, learn and play. The forums also provided an opportunity for organisations to raise questions and reflect on their capacity to implement the Child Safe Standards.

In preparation for the stakeholder forums, attendees were invited to complete a short survey. This survey sought feedback on how organisations currently see themselves functioning in areas of child safe practice. The survey results indicated the Child Safe Standards that organisations felt most reflected their current practice (Standard 5 and Standard 10), and the Child Safe Standards that will require the most work to implement (Standard 2 and Standard 6).

WHO ENGAGED

A strong response

Approximately sixty individuals attended the sessions, representing a range of community, religious, residential and educational institutions and organisations. The diversity of attendees fostered dynamic discussion and enabled the group to consider current practices and potential next steps.

The majority of attendees represented medium to large organisations, primarily operating in the Canberra region, and catering to the needs of children and young people. The following organisations attended:

ACT Bar Association	ACT Churches Council	ACT Government
ACT Jewish Community	ACT Ombudsman	ACT Playgroups
ACT Policing	ACT Principals Association	ACT Teacher Quality Institute
ACT Together	ACTCOSS	AIS ACT
Anglicare	Barnardos Australia	Catholic Archbishop's Office
Catholic Education	CatholicCare	CREATE Foundation
Catholic Youth Summer Camp	Daramalan College	Girl Guides
Independent Education Union	Karinya House	Marymead
Menslink	Merici College	Scripture Union ACT
Red Cross	Scouts ACT	Uniting Care Kippax
St Vincent de Paul Society	The Salvation Army	Woden Community Service
Uniting Children and Families ACT	Uniting Church	
Youth Coalition of the ACT	YWCA	



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Key insights from stakeholders

- We must focus on building a culture that is both child safe and child friendly. Attendees noted there is a difference between institutions 'being safe' (from a regulatory perspective) and 'feeling safe' (from the perspective of a child or young person).
- Participation by children and young people is a form of protection.
- It is important to involve children and young people in developing a range of options that enable them to feel supported (e.g. consider peer supports, family supports and organisational supports).
- Individuals and organisations require a 'single source of truth' – a resource that outlines statutory obligations and responsibilities.
- Different institutions and organisations pose different challenges. This means that training and resources must be available and iterative, as well as being tailored – including to organisation type, specific child or young person needs and evolving technology.

Attendees noted their organisations and institutions had a range of processes and policies in place to protect the safety of children and young people. They highlighted the experience of their staff and the compliance difficulties presented by volunteer workforces and numerous regulatory schemes. In order to improve their ability to protect children and young people, attendees expressed a need for clear obligations and ongoing support from the ACT Government and their sector.

Attendees acknowledged that the process of being child safe is ongoing, but there is a need for reviews and points of reflection built in along the way. To make this work, organisations suggested building linkages between smaller and larger organisations, increased awareness of sector obligations and developing a systematic approach to identifying gaps in the system.

Forum discussions

Attendees were asked to reflect on the following questions:

If the ACT Government was to legislate for Child Safe Standards, what would this mean for your organisation?

1. **What have you got?**
2. **What do you need?**
3. **How long would it take?**
4. **How do we make it work?**

Things organisations have – current capabilities and capacity

- Internal governance arrangements (including guidelines, processes, principles and practices)
- External obligations (arising under ACT or Australian laws)
- Experience with children and young people
- A range of employee types (paid employees, volunteers, etc.)
- Various existing training programs and packages

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Things organisations need

- Clarity of expectations and obligations
- A broad understanding of what makes an organisation child safe and child friendly (including the types of abuse that may occur)
- Ongoing training to build capability and a culture of safety – tailored to counter perception bias and navigate complex behaviour, cultural differences and varied age groups
- Additional guidance for vulnerable cohorts
- Reporting mechanisms that accommodate children and young people and how they are likely to engage with the system (allowing intuitive reports e.g. ‘he/she’s creepy’ to be taken seriously)
- Resources for volunteer and smaller organisations to reduce administrative burden
- Timely responses when concerns are raised

How long organisations think it will take

- Needs to be an ongoing, iterative process
- Time frames are dependent on what is required and what resources are provided
- Need stages and reviews built in

How we can make it work

- Build linkages between small, medium and large organisations – sharing information and building communities of practice
- Buy-in from across the community sector – including cultural and commercial organisations
- Organisations, institutions and the government need to invest in public awareness
- Encourage and empower children and young people to participate in the process – individuals won’t report if previous or smaller issues were not taken seriously
- A systematic approach to ensure capability gaps are identified and addressed

WHAT’S NEXT?

Discussions about the implementation of Child Safe Standards are ongoing. The ACT Government will continue to engage with all organisations that will be required to meet the Child Safe Standards.

We understand the need to design processes that accommodate the capabilities of all organisations and to create opportunities for organisations to become safer places for children and young people to live, learn and play.

Survey on YourSay

The ACT Government will continue to provide updates on progress toward the implementation of the Royal Commission’s recommendations on the [YourSay](https://yoursay.act.gov.au) website. We will also use this website to provide information about upcoming events and further opportunities to engage with the government.

We invite you to complete the survey about your organisation’s readiness to implement Child Safe Standards which can be accessed from the [YourSay](https://yoursay.act.gov.au) website. This survey was circulated to attendees prior to the forums and is an opportunity for you to provide further, anonymous feedback.

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Further information

If you would like to discuss the Child Safe Standards further or would like to share any information about work your organisation is currently undertaking to make your organisation child safe, please contact:

Jodie Griffiths-Cook
Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
ACT Human Rights Commission
02 6205 2222
Jodie.Griffiths-Cook@act.gov.au

Key Dates

November 2012	Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
December 2017	The Royal Commission handed down its Final Report
June 2018	The ACT Government released its formal response to the Royal Commission's recommendations
July 2018	The National Redress Scheme for abuse survivors became active
October 2018	ACT Government held stakeholder forums to discuss the Child Safe Standards
October 2018	Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, delivered a National Apology to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse
December 2018	The ACT Government will release its first annual progress report against the Royal Commission recommendations

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

409

The Royal Commission made a total of 409 recommendations

307

Recommendations were relevant to the ACT

290

The ACT accepted or accepted in principle 290 of the relevant recommendations

58

Individuals attended the recent stakeholder forums