



The Lives We Want

conversation series

Brief 1:

Child Safe and ChildPlace: the next generation of Workplace Health & Safety (April 2018)

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About *The Lives We Want* Conversation Series

The Lives We Want conversation series provides a twice-yearly opportunity for senior business leaders to engage on social justice issues, providing a channel to voice their concerns, opinions and experiences of social justice issues in the corporate environment. The series is a joint initiative of Anglicare Southern Queensland and the Anglican Church Southern Queensland Social Responsibilities Committee, with sponsorship from Consolidated Properties.

About our presenter



Kate Hillman is a Partner in People Advisory Services, EY Australia, where she leads the Queensland People Advisory practice, combining her formal qualifications in Executive Business Operations with comprehensive experience in organisational transformation programs. Kate has deep experience in organisation design, change and strategic planning and execution.

As the lead Partner for EY's collaboration with Bravehearts, Kate is a foundational member of the EY Bravehearts team responsible for developing *ChildPlace*, a risk management approach to protecting children and youth. Kate leads the review and implementation of child and youth safety reviews nationally, bringing together culture and education with risk management and compliance to drive effective, safer practices and behaviours necessary to keep children and youth safe.

Kate contributed to the research of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and was involved in policy consultations. Her passion to build a better working world is realised by developing safe and sustainable work practices that protect the brand and reputation of her clients in sectors including education, child protection services, emergency services, performing arts and defence.

Child Safe and *ChildPlace*: the next generation of WH&S

There are few organisations that do not interact with children directly or indirectly, through their clients, customers, or even the families or volunteer activities of their staff. Community expectations around child safety are increasing, and it is only a matter of time until these will begin to be reflected in legislation affecting all organisations – public, private, commercial and not-for-profit.

In the inaugural presentation of *The Lives We Want* conversation series, Kate Hillman addressed the risks, obligations and opportunities this changing landscape creates for business. How do we embed a culture of protecting children in our businesses, organisations and communities?



Introduction

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is changing community expectations for child protection and will likely result in changes to legislative obligations for all organisations including public, private, commercial or not-for-profit.

Organisations in any sector that don't understand or manage their child protection risks could be held to account for their actions or inaction.

To address this issue, Bravehearts and EY formed an alliance to launch *ChildPlace* Health & Safety, a risk management initiative aimed at helping organisations shift the way they protect children from sexual assault.

This brief is based on Kate Hillman's presentation, in which she outlined some of the thinking behind *ChildPlace*, and the key components of a child safe organisation: culture, governance and policies, risk management, learning and recruitment.



Research indicates approximately one in five children, or 59,000 children per year, will be sexually harmed in some way before their 18th birthday.¹

Research varies but suggests that between 9 and 20% of child sex offenders locate their child victims through the offender's place of employment or through organised activities such as sporting or recreational venues.²



Culture is key

When first thinking about this issue, I looked at the mining and resources sector — an industry where there had been many injuries, over a long period of time. However, over the past 10-20 years the industry has been able to fundamentally shift that.

Wanting to understand how that had been done, we looked at the safety regime in mining and how that was embedded in workplaces.

When I started as a contractor in that industry, a staff member crossed against the lights on the way to a meeting. It was made really clear that that was unacceptable behaviour because it was against the company's safety code. If you didn't take that code seriously, you would be asked to leave.

It wasn't about the motivation behind a breach, or whether a dangerous outcome actually eventuated. We can't understand or control others' intentions. For example:

If I work for a gas company, and I stand in a gas field and light a cigarette, no one is particularly interested if I'm a terrorist or if I'm just a fool, other employees will act to stop me. The culture itself is preventative.

So, while we can't divine someone else's intent, we can control the observable unsafe behaviour that leads to a dangerous situation. This is what we need to focus on rather than the individual and their motivations.

In my view, child safety is currently focused on the concept of trying to identify who is a likely offender, which can create cultures of paranoia. Many organisations are having trouble finding men to work with children, for instance. By focusing on individual risk and not so much on behaviours, we run the risk of ignoring the unsafe behaviours of those we trust. There is a reluctance to report unless we see something truly horrendous, as we don't want to risk mislabelling someone that we have otherwise always trusted. It would be much better to call out unsafe behaviours early, not assume people's intent. Clearly for those behaviours which constitute an offence, mandatory reporting is a given.

So, if we embed a norm around safe behaviours, it moves away from being about an accusation, and instead is about a breach of our organisation's cultural expectation of what is appropriate behaviour and what's not.

Overall, it's a much more positive message, and opens the door to talking about these things openly. It's never going to be black and white. Some contact is OK *in* a ballet class, but not *out* of it, for example. People also have different levels of adeptness or understanding around social skills, and this can be a challenge in communicating or interpreting behaviours.

But the critical starting point is normalising the conversation at all levels of organisations, and in every part of the community.

If we want the whole community to understand the issue we need to lift the capability of the whole community. It's not just a problem for churches, colleges, schools and so on. It's an issue for everyone — transport organisations, sporting clubs, airlines. There are so many environments in which children are vulnerable.

Taking policy out of the back office

Organisations need to have good child protection policies, procedures and governance in place. But more than that, we need to ask ourselves:

- Are our policies and procedures sitting in giant binders in someone's office? Or can they be seen and accessed by everyone – staff, parents, children themselves?
- Are our policies and procedures supported by resources and education — where to go for help, what unsafe behaviours actually look like?
- How do policies and procedures play out away from head office? Branch staff sometimes alter procedures because their local environment doesn't accommodate a particular policy, or central office policy might not have filtered to the regions at all.
- Is there a nominated person responsible overall for child protection issues, able to look at trends and patterns? Organisations need a centralised point of information in order to be able to act when needed.

You don't have to wait for a criminal act to occur to decide if people are behaving safely in your environment. If they are ignoring the child protection policies and procedures you have embedded in your organisational culture, that's your answer.

Managing risk and the 'how' of keeping children safe

Risk management frameworks are useful tools for child protection, because they involve reporting requirements and a chain of responsibility.

They can also draw attention to risks in areas that aren't normally associated with children. If you're in HR, for example, you're telling the story of the organisation, you're designing the advertisements to attract the right people for your business, you're reviewing resumes, which means there are





risks and responsibilities attached to the way you do that. It's not just the obvious areas where people work directly with children.

By defining what the risks are and the ways in which the organisation should be responding, and regularly revisiting that framework, child protection becomes embedded in the way you do business. Monitoring the risks in the same way you track other organisational risks allows you to assess the effectiveness of your policies, procedures and governance, and continually improve the safety of your environment for children. It takes the hysteria out of the dialogue, and provides a structured, calm approach and framework that focuses on the 'how' of keeping children safe.

Learning for all

Education is fundamental: right across organisations, on a large scale and as quickly as possible.

Everyone needs to know what unsafe behaviours look like — what forms grooming can take, for example. You want to close as many doors as possible if you have a potential offender in your environment.

Education also helps managers to have the hard conversation when they need to. If you think someone is behaving inappropriately then you need to have the confidence to ask: *"I'm not suggesting this is what you intend, but you are not modelling behaviours that will keep kids safe if they do encounter an offender, and how are we managing it?"*.

More generally, even if people never need to use that knowledge in their business, they're going to go home and think in a different way about keeping their own children safe.

We need to reach children as well, so they understand about the right to feel safe and the boundaries of what is and isn't acceptable. Children need to know they'll be taken seriously if they tell someone. There's been research showing that in 98% of reports by children, their statements were found to be true.³

So it becomes a community cultural shift.

Recruiting the right people

Think carefully about your recruitment process and your employment contracts. You need to have the robustness and flexibility to take action, without having to wait for a criminal act to occur.



HR practitioners need to follow the processes, do the reference checks and know what questions to ask. They need to be aware of what the red flags look like in someone's CV.

There is a need to employ people who are capable of having those difficult and courageous conversations with staff if they become aware of risks or incidents.

A final thought

Creating a child-safe environment needs to be led by those in senior positions — but it has to be a commitment by every person at every level of the organisation. We have to build child protection into everything we do: our communications, the way we recruit and go about our everyday business, the way we promote ourselves. We need to be positive about building this culture.

I hope that in 10 years' time, child protection is so much a part of what we do that it's old news.

Resources and links

Anglicare SQ services and programs

anglicaresq.org.au/news/protecting-children-everybodys-business

ChildPlace program

go.ey.com/2tbf43k

Bravehearts

bravehearts.org.au

If you need assistance or would like to talk to someone on this issue we encourage you to contact:

Anglicare 1300 610 610

Bravehearts 1800 272 831

Anglicare as a child safe organisation

Anglicare SQ is an active participant in the Anglicare Australia Child Safe Working Group. The group is currently developing frameworks and assessment tools needed for members of the Anglicare network nationally to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Principles, to be endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments, are drawn from the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

References

1. Australian Institute of Criminology, 1993; James, 2000; Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006 and based on current Australian population figures provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. Erooga, Allnock & Telford, 2012; Leclerc, Wortley & Smallbone, 2011; Smallbone & Wortley, 2000; Sullivan & Beech, 2004.
3. Dympna House (1998). Info Kit: A booklet on childhood sexual abuse. Haberfield [NSW]: Dympna House.



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