

Child safe, child friendly organisations

Reflections on the impact of the Royal Commission

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Stephen Smallbone
Griffith Criminology Institute
Griffith University
S.Smallbone@griffith.edu.au



Why 'child safe, child *friendly*'?

Preventing abuse is not an end in itself

- Serves superordinate goal of facilitating healthy physical, social and psychological development
- Singular focus on 'child safe' may reduce problem to one of risk detection and risk mitigation
 - Close attention needed to unintended, as well as intended, outcomes
 - e.g. erosion of civil liberties; unnecessary privacy intrusions; cultivating culture of distrust/suspicion; net reduction in amenity of place; effects on relationships with adults and peers; exacerbating –ve outcomes for victims??
- Goal is to provide protective and *friendly* organisational environments for children and young people (and adults!)

Prevention is better than cure

RC tasked primarily with investigating **responses** to abuse

- Has exposed many individual and systemic failures
 - Many organisations have, as a result, redoubled efforts to ensure compliance with expected protocols for responding to known/suspected incidents
 - Less attention to how abuse might be prevented in the first place
 - Retribution and redress (*consequences*) versus prevention (*causes*)
 - Much attention by organisations on screening out unsuitable people
 - Most known sex offenders (80%?) have no prior record of sexual offences
 - For many (most?) abusers, motivation to abuse first arises **during** their involvement with the organisation (not just a matter of improving screening methods)
 - Screening does not apply to children/young people, who are probably the most likely to abuse
 - Many organisations in fact **screen in** those children/yp with the greatest vulnerabilities for offending and victimisation (e.g. youth detention; out-of-home care; community & residential services)
- Prevention requires attention to how risks arise in the routine activities of **ordinary** adults, adolescents and children

Understanding the dynamics of abuse

Prevention begins with a clear and valid conception of the problem

- Who, what, where, when, how, and why
- Offending and victimisation research and practice dominated instead by concerns about **outcomes** of abuse
 - Important for preventing reoffending and ameliorating harms for victims
 - However, knowledge about outcomes is of limited relevance for preventing abuse in the first place
 - Organisations need to know how abuse **starts**, not how it ends
- In the absence of clarity about the causes of abuse, organisational leaders and workers susceptible to simplistic and unhelpful stereotypes
 - Reduces problem to mysterious existence of disturbed, determined, adept 'paedophiles' (illustrated by 'bad apple' defence in some RC hearings)
- Key is to understand how organisational settings themselves can enable, facilitate, or precipitate abuse-related motivations and behaviour
 - Including among otherwise ordinary adults and adolescents

Opportunities

Royal Commission giving impetus to development of CSCF policy and practice

- Significant national and international activity
- Many organisations in the same boat (ideas; experiences; collaboration; resources)
- Organisations can control situations and (organisational) systems
 - May also be able to reduce individual abuse-related vulnerabilities
 - More difficult to identify or control individual predispositions to abuse
 - Situational prevention is a proven* problem-solving method
- Comprehensive prevention model
 - Three targets: potential abusers; potential victims; settings
 - Three prevention levels: primary; secondary; tertiary

Prevention matrix

Prevention levels	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Prevention targets			
(Potential) abusers	General deterrence	Intervening with risky behaviours	Preventing recidivism
(Potential) victims	Reducing vulnerabilities	Cocooning vulnerable children	Preventing re-victimisation
Settings	CSCF design (situational prevention)	Intervening with risky places	Re-designing settings

Challenges

Understanding maltreatment: who, what, where, when, how, and why

- Recognising and avoiding unhelpful stereotypes
- Recognising patterns within heterogeneity
- Understanding dynamics
 - Beware the availability bias (and the fundamental attribution error, and ...)

Focusing on prevention, not just on responding after the fact

- Understanding how abuse arises / unfolds (individuals, situations, systems)
- About children's safety and well-being, not just risk detection and management
- Prioritising strategies according to probability, impact & feasibility/cost

Focusing on internal, as well as external, risks

Managing local settings

- Policy/leadership → day to day interactions with children
- Generic **and** targeted strategies (specific times, places, activities, individuals)

Utilising external knowledge and expertise