



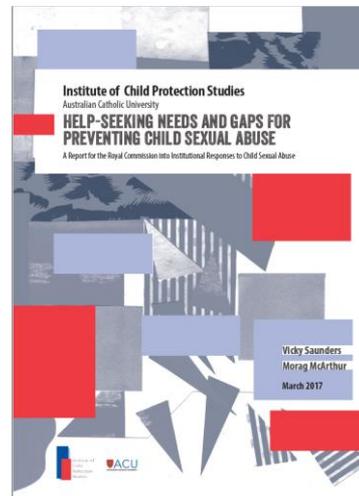
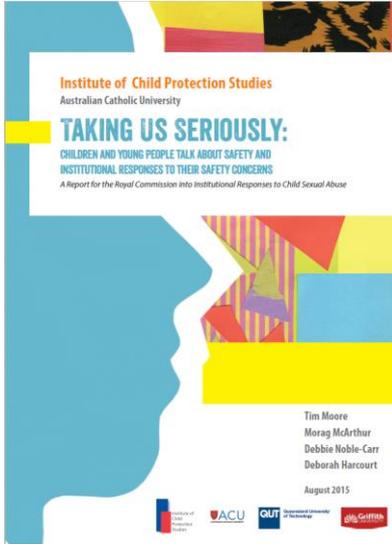
# Protective Participation in organisational culture and practice

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# Institute of Child Protection Studies

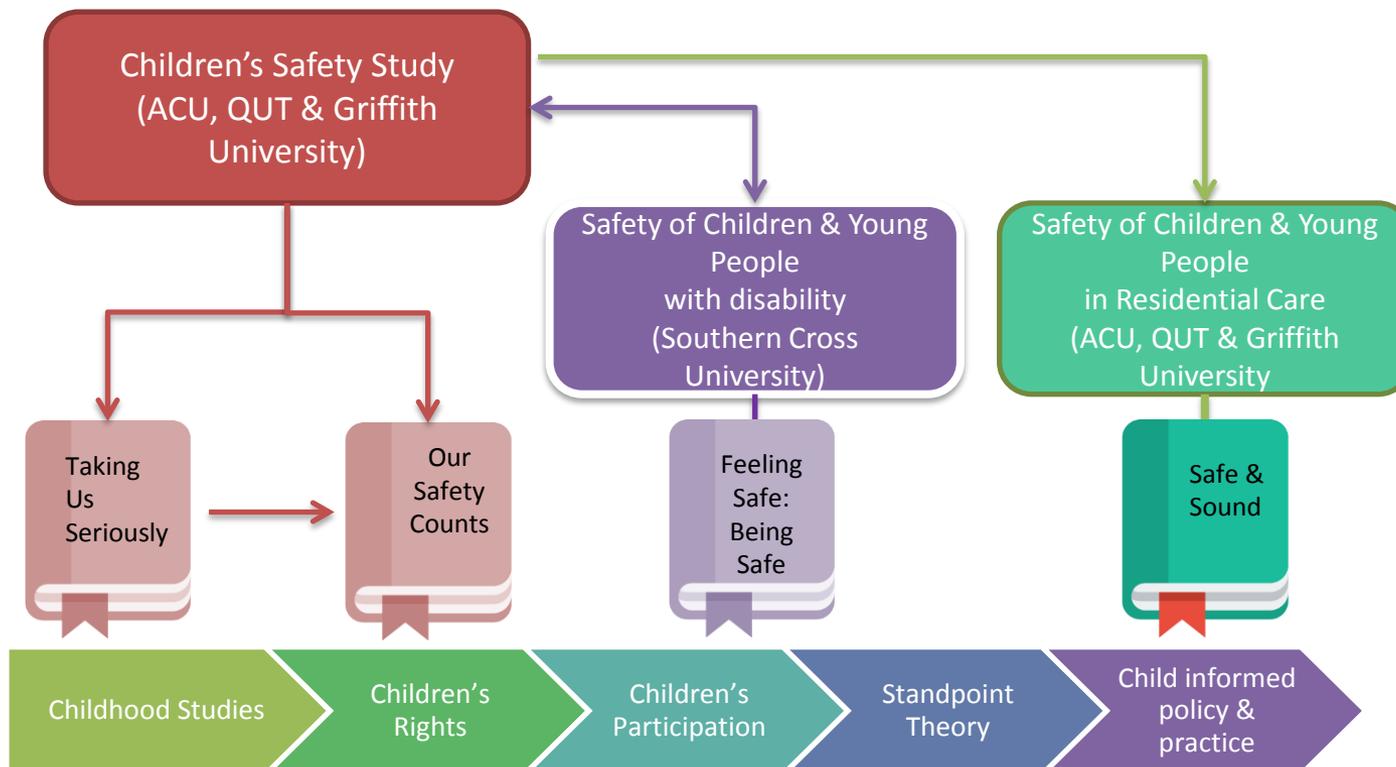


- ICPS was established in 2005 after review into the abuse of children and young people in care.
- Since then, ICPS has developed into an internationally recognised research centre and has conducted over 100 high quality research projects
- ICPS' research strengths include:
  - Promoting children's participation
  - Strengthening service systems and informing practice
  - Supporting child-safe communities
- Since 2013, ICPS has conducted three influential pieces of research for the Royal Commission
  - leading to seven further studies on children's safety in institutions



- *The societal norm that ‘children should be **seen but not heard**’, which prevailed for unknown decades, **provided the opportunity for some adults to abuse the power** which their relationship with the child gave them. When the required silence of the child was accompanied by an unquestioning **belief by adults** in the integrity of the carer for the child, be they youth worker, teacher, residential supervisor or cleric, the **power imbalance was entrenched** to the inevitable detriment of many children.*
- *We must ensure that in the future the institution does not silence the child. The institution must work to ensure that the child can be heard. [\(Hon Justice McClennan AM, 2015\)](#)*

## How do children perceive & experience safety in institutions and how do institutions respond?



# What does it mean to be safe?



- **Being safe and feeling safe are two different things**
  - Kids are more concerned about **FEELING SAFE** and adults are more concerned about kids **BEING SAFE** and often forget that to **BE SAFE** they need both
- **Children tell whether they're safe or not based:**
  - On their bodies
  - On their behaviours
  - On other's behaviours
  - On what they've seen or heard
  - On what they've experienced
- **To be safe, kids need:**
  - Familiarity, predictability and some sense of control
  - To be with those they trust
  - For adults to be adult-like, to demonstrate their respect for kids, to use their power **FOR** children, to take control, to do what they say they are going to do

# Physical vulnerability

*There are some things that are only dangerous for kids. Like its highly unlikely that someone is going to pull over and grab an adult and put them in the car because they're an adult but it's much more likely if you're a kid*



<http://www.whatsonyourwall.com/banksy-graffiti-25/banksy-kid-tyre-swing-b136-39495.htm>

# What are children and young people's most pressing safety concerns?

- Creepy adults
- Adults who take advantage of children & use their power *over* them
- Adult & peer bullies
- Peers who sexually harass
- Child abduction



# Relational and intergenerational vulnerability

*Because they're adults and we're kids we're always going to be in a worse off position. Everyone thinks that adults can treat kids how they want, that kids should be respectful of adults no matter what and that children should just do what adults say because their kids and adults are adults (YP-3)*

*They stand over you and make you feel really small. They want to remind you that you are weak and you have to do exactly what they say. There's nothing you can do because you're just a kid and you can't fight back.... That's why kids are unsafe because they can't stand up and protect themselves. If no one is around anything could happen.*



<http://www.whatsonyourwall.com/banksy-graffiti-25/banksy-search-little-girl-colour-baby-11595.htm>

# Lack of knowledge and skills: about risks and strategies



*'No one really talks to kids about what really could happen or tell 'em not to worry when the thing they're scared about ain't gonna happen. So kids are all stressing about the wrong things and they don't know what to do if something real bad happens, because no one talked to 'em about it'... 'if they're old enough to understand it they should be talked to 'em about it.'* (Young People, Group 2)

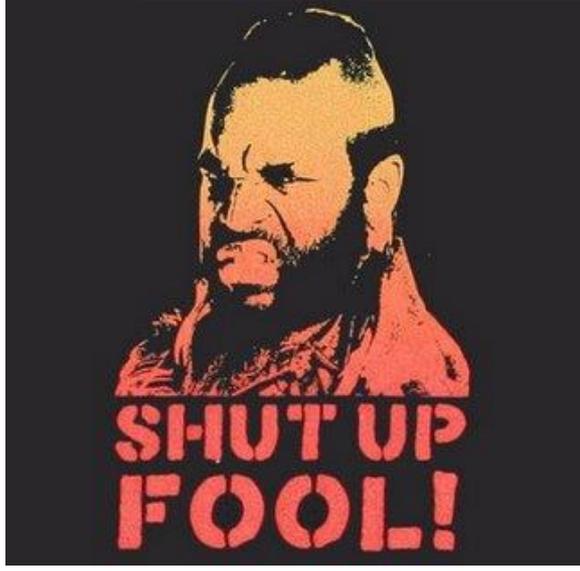
*Those [Working with Children] checks should be for us too. So that we know that an adult is safe. Because we're the ones who have to trust them"... "But why would they show them to us? It's because they think we don't care or that we don't need to know", "we're the ones who need to know".*



# Adults views about children compounding vulnerability

- Children tell lies
- CYP don't know or understand anything
  - You don't want to scare them
  - It's inappropriate
- CYP won't have anything valuable to offer
- Adults know best
- Children don't need to know





# Organisational powerlessness

- *Adults protect each other and the institution*

*‘Adults won’t usually stand up against an adult bully. Maybe it’s because they don’t see it as a problem or maybe because they don’t want to get caught in the middle of it. I think people think it’s OK to intimidate a kid, particularly if it’s so they do something that people think is good for the kid. But that doesn’t mean that it’s OK.’ (MX-1)*

*‘There’s too many pressures on them to do other things than just listen to us or to care about things that happen outside of their job’... ‘If they have to choose between writing a report or asking us how we’re going and what we need they’ll always have choose doing office work – because there’ll be consequences for them if they don’t’... ‘Like their boss will get angry’... ‘They’re not accountable to us so it doesn’t matter if they don’t do what we ask them to do, what we need.’ (Children and Young People Mixed Group, 1)*



# Children have no authority

- *Adults have no responsibility to kids. They say “we want to know what you think” or “what do you want?” but what's the point in asking if there's no responsibility to do anything. There's too many things that get in the way. Like if a worker's boss tells them to do something they have to do it. But if a kids asks for something there's no responsibility for them to do anything... It's so frustrating”*

<http://desmotivaciones.es/393595/Graffitis>



# Lack of power when responding to abuse

- Adults go into 'savior mode'
- Young people are not given choices about how issues are dealt with
- Little information is provided about what is going on
- Little support is provided when a child re-integrates
- Children's vulnerability and powerlessness if compounded by feelings of isolation



<https://www.pinterest.com.au/perrin0578/women-+-graffiti-+-egypt/>

1. The organization shows that it values and takes children and young people's safety seriously



2. The organization knows who and what things might hurt children and young people & acts when they're unsafe



3. Children and young people play a role in identifying and shaping responses to abuse



Kids show they are safe there



4. The organisation is upfront about the risks to children and young people and how they're being managed

10. The organization values children and young people's feedback – even when it's bad – and have child-friendly ways of getting complaints



5. The organization recognizes children and young people's strengths and vulnerabilities and empowers them



9. The organization is happy to have someone come in to check they are doing a good job



8. When children encounter unsafe people they are given a say on what should happen and adults act on their needs and wishes



7. Alliances are built and trusted staff are available when children and young people need them



6. The organization actively protects and empowers children and young people who might need extra support



# Doing enough?

More participants felt that adults were doing enough or some things than not.  
However, 1/5 felt that adults were **doing nothing**

Extent of prevention	Age (years)				
	12 and under % (n=152)	13 % (n=140)	14 % (n=147)	15 % (n=156)	16 and over % (n=137)
I think my school is doing					
Enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	26.6*	16.3	17.7	17.7	21.7
Some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	19.6	20.9	22.2*	20.9	16.5
Nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	2.4	22.0	24.4	24.4	26.8*
I'm not sure	16.5	24.1	26.6	16.7	16.5

# Towards Protective Participation

- Protective participation describes processes that provide opportunities for children and young people to identify risks and to inform, shape and provide feedback on strategies to promote their safety, prevent abuse and appropriately respond when they are harmed. **It is informed by and informs CYP**
- It enables them to build their skills and capabilities and their confidence in adults and institutions, increasing their sense of safety. **It builds skills and capabilities**
- It appreciates children and young people's strengths as well as their vulnerabilities.
- A respectful alliance between adults and children is forged and fosters meaningful and appropriate dialogue. **It builds trust and confidence**
- It is safely conducted and aims to improve children and young people's safety
- Protective participation **supports the empowerment of children and young people and** encourages them to be **meaningfully engaged in their own protection**. It does **not**, however, encourage students to feel **solely responsible** for their own safety or the safety of their peers but, instead, to **work with teachers and schools to respond to their safety needs**



# Children and young people's recommendations for addressing vulnerability

- Adult-child alliances should be fostered
- Adults and organizations should appreciate children's worries and concerns
- Adults and organizations should recognize the impacts of generational vulnerability and actively redress it within institutions
- Formal mechanisms should be initiated to enable children and young people to make decisions and their should be obligations for adults and organisations to act
- Engage and empower peers
- Feedback should be sought on how well strategies are meeting their needs
- Complaints processes should be child-centred
- Institutions should have external monitoring that engages children and young people
- Children and young people should be helped to build confidence through experience



# Key Messages

- Children's participation is a key element of creating child safe institutions (Valentine et al 2016)
  - Often limited
  - Did not inspire confidence in adults or institutions
- Had a focus on empowering them to disclose rather than in identifying or preventing harm
- For organisations to be child-safe they need to empower children and reduce their inter-generational and organizational vulnerability
- Provide more alliances and opportunities to participate

It's important that young people have an opportunity to talk about this stuff but it has to be done safely so, you know, it doesn't make life worse for them ... But I think that even though adults are scared to talk about this stuff because it is uncomfortable, it has to be done if things are going to change. (Young People, Group 4)



# Find out more

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## Standard 7

### ***Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children*** [\*"An overview of the Victorian child safe standards"\*](#)

- No mention of children's lack of power
  - No strategies to redress power imbalances or to give kids some power
  - No requirement to listen to kids or to take on board their views or wishes
  - No consideration of children as "clients" or "consumers" and their consumer rights
  - No consideration of complaints / grievances
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