



we can prevent child abuse

The content of the diary below was written by an 11 year old whose father sexually abused her. Although she would prefer to remain anonymous, these are actual excerpts from her diary.

Dear Diary,

I don't know what to do, I can't tell anyone about my secret.

If I tell Dad said that he would kill me. Dad said that Mum will be mad if I tell her and that she will not believe me. I do not want him to touch me again. I hate it. I feel like dirt. I want it to stop but don't know how. I hate everything about me. I hate it when Dad touches me. I can not tell anyone because they will think I am horrible.

I am disgusting. I hate his hands on me. I want it to stop. It hurts, I just close my eyes really tight and try and think of something else.

Dear Diary,

I can't stop thinking about it, I can not concentrate at school or even on TV. I am trying to stay busy so that I do not have time to think about it, but it is always there, it is always there in the back of my head. I hate it. Every time I close my eyes I see him; staring at me, looking into my eyes, touching me, and I feel it. It is as though it is all happening again. I can feel him around me even though I know he is not here in the room with me now. I am terrified of going to sleep. I am terrified that he is going to come back into my room.

Dear Diary,

It happened again, I hate myself so much. I want it to stop. I can not tell anyone. No one will believe me. They will think that I am lying. I am just a kid. I am so sad.

Dear Diary,

Mum and I were cooking today and I thought that I should really tell her what Daddy has been doing to me, but then I didn't want to spoil our time together, so I didn't say anything. She would get really mad at me if I told her anyways, as it is all my fault.

These harrowing extracts highlight the terror, guilt, self blame and fear that this young girl experienced. This case is not unusual and reflects the lives of the majority of victims of child sexual abuse; many of whom are haunted by these feelings for the rest of their lives. Silence and secrecy allows child abuse to flourish and this is why the vast majority of child sex offenders are never detected. Society as a whole plays a significant role in maintaining this secrecy. It's easy to turn away when something is so horrific and completely incomprehensible to the average person.

However we must as individuals, as communities and as a nation tackle this hidden epidemic that affects millions of children. We must break the intergenerational cycle of child sexual abuse perpetuated by ignorance and denial.

We know that child abuse is preventable and the first steps are education, greater awareness and an acknowledgement by all levels of society, including government. This is why Child Wise launched the SPEAK UP campaign, so Australians can be empowered to identify the signs, learn how to respond and prevent it from happening in the first place, or intervene in the early stages.

The societal costs of our childrens' shattered lives are huge and long-lasting. It is estimated that child abuse-related medical care, foster care, social and psychological costs, police and legal bills cost Australians more than \$2.5 billion a year. Yet at the same time minimal funding is spent on preventing child abuse. Almost all governments have adopted a reactive and crisis driven response to child protection.

Whilst acknowledging the necessity to respond to children who are victims of abuse, Child Wise recommends that the Australian government invest more in child abuse prevention. We can prevent the abuse of millions of children, today and in the future, with the right programs and strategies. We must act now.

Yours sincerely

Bernadette McMenamin AO, CEO



SPEAK UP empowering Australians to protect children



1 in 4 girls are sexually abused in Australia.
1 in 7 boys are sexually abused in Australia.

Australian Institute of Criminology 2004

In response to the rising rates of child sexual abuse we have launched SPEAK UP, a groundbreaking national campaign that encourages Australians to SPEAK UP about child sexual abuse. Often people are reluctant to discuss such an unpalatable subject, but it's our mission to make it acceptable to talk openly about this critical issue. If all of us SPEAK UP where children can't, we can make a huge difference to millions of young lives.

Thanks to the generous support from the IOOF Foundation and the HBOS Australia Foundation, SPEAK UP has brought the serious problem of child sexual abuse into the public eye. Keeping it visible means we can protect our children from predators by identifying warning signs and responding when they do speak up.



Only about 3% of abused children will ever tell.

Savi Report 2004

We hear of so many heartbreaking cases that could have been avoided if people knew what signs to look out for, what to do, and how to seek help. SPEAK UP educates Australians on how to identify signs of abuse, teaches people how to talk to children if they have concerns, know who to speak to and how to report it. Often children are afraid to speak up about the abuse they suffer. They fear punishment or rejection by loved ones. We want to stop the suffering endured by this silent majority and help every Australian have the power and responsibility to SPEAK UP and protect our children.



31% of respondents in an Australian study stated they would not believe children's stories about being abused; meaning most children would have to tell 3 different adults before they are believed.

Australian Childhood Foundation Report 2006

Since launching the SPEAK UP campaign on February 12th, we have been overwhelmed with the response across Australia.

Our office has been inundated with calls from the public; some of whom have never had the courage to speak up about their concerns relating to child sexual abuse.

We have responded to a wide range of cases, including parents who suspect their children are being abused, teachers or carers worried about children in their care, and survivors of child sexual abuse.

We distributed posters, information booklets and postcards to over 30,000 organisations. Since then we have had thousands of requests for further material. Our free information sessions for parents and carers have been booked out in every state.

Child Wise's CEO Bernadette McMenamin, has given dozens of high-profile radio and television interviews and the SPEAK UP campaign has appeared in 'Cleo' and 'Vive'.

The SPEAK UP campaign has been embraced by the Australian community. We are waiting to hear from the Federal Government following our requests for their acknowledgement of this important and unique program.

We hope for financial support to sustain this critical initiative that could prevent millions of vulnerable children becoming victims, and help children who are currently being abused.

In the meantime, due to the overwhelming demand from the Australian community, Child Wise is asking for support from valued donations.

The bottom line is that this immense problem needs commitment, involvement and the resources of many to make a difference.

Put an end to the abuse that shatters the innocence of our kids.

Our kids deserve our protection. Let's start NOW.

Check out our new website to view the SPEAK UP TV advertisements, download useful reports, educational tools and get involved. You can also download the SPEAK UP booklet, visit www.childwise.net

Child Wise wishes to thank Venus Advertising for their overwhelming support and expertise. Without them our SPEAK UP campaign simply would not have been possible. Thank you.

Melbourne-based musician and singer Fab Tolli is, quite literally, one of SPEAK UP's most vocal supporters. In early March he launched 'Zero', a compilation album of original songs performed by talented unsigned Australian musicians.

Fab was compelled to help Child Wise when he read one of our pamphlets about child abuse whilst dropping his young daughter at child care. He knew he could use his skills as a musician to help spread awareness of the SPEAK UP campaign and developed the idea to create and distribute a CD. Child Wise is very grateful to Fab, his team and all the artists for their generous support of, and commitment to, SPEAK UP. They have worked tirelessly in their efforts to promote awareness.

A generous 100% of profits will go directly to the SPEAK UP campaign. To purchase a copy of the ZERO CD for \$18 incl. P&H, visit our website www.childwise.net



Above: Bernadette McMenamin presents an Indonesian family with new fishing boats after the 2006 Tsunami.

Our Tsunami Appeal

Thanks to our generous supporters, and a donation from Slow Food Victoria, the Child Wise Tsunami Fishing Fund purchased new fishing boats for the small fishing village of Pangandaran in Indonesia.

The 2006 tsunami destroyed the village, killing hundreds and displacing over 100,000 people, leaving them without means to support themselves. This total destabilisation, coupled with the influx of emergency workers, rendered children vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Child Wise launched an appeal to buy new fishing boats for the village to help them regain self-sufficiency. Two boats were purchased and thanks to the Lonely Planet Foundation we were able to visit Pangandaran to deliver Child Trauma Counselling Training and give the boats to families in need.

It is heartening to see the extraordinary capacity of the Pangandaran community to rebuild itself after such trauma, and we are very grateful to all who supported this appeal.

With special thanks to:



Help us make a safer world for children. Together we can keep their dreams alive. Your support can help reduce the epidemic of child sexual abuse and exploitation. 90% of every donation we receive goes directly into making a safer world for kids, now. Fax this donation slip to (03) 9645 8922 or post it to P.O. Box 451, South Melbourne VIC 3205.

Name

Address

Telephone Mobile

Preferred Email

Here's my gift of:

\$15 \$30 \$50 \$100 \$200

Other (\$AUD)

Cheque Credit Card

Credit Card Type

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date / / Card Verification Number

Signature

'Child abuse is a hidden epidemic and our last taboo that we must expose. It is unacceptable that we as a nation stand by while millions of our children are being harmed in ways that will traumatise them – often for the rest of their lives.'

Bernadette McMenamin AO, CEO of Child Wise

