



Media Release

Child Abuse Figures Highlight Need for National Strategy

Australia's national peak representing families today called for a national strategy to combat child abuse.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report *Child Protection in Australia 2004-05*, released today, revealed:

- every national indicator of child abuse has increased every year for six years running,
- the number of children in out-of-home care has risen by 70% since 1996,
- the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was over six times that of other children,
- an Australian child was harmed, or found likely to be harmed, every 11 minutes in 2004-5: that's nearly twice as often as in 1999-2000.

'While the increase is partly explained by better reporting and greater awareness, a major concern is the over-representation of one-parent families in terms of child abuse and neglect substantiations', said Families Australia Chief Executive Officer Brian Babington.

'This results from the fact that sole parents are more likely to have low incomes and be financially stressed, suffer from social isolation, and/or have less support from their immediate family'.

'These problems are everyone's concern, and diminish family wellbeing in Australia overall. We all bear the costs of child abuse in some way'.

'More leadership and greater attention is required at national and state levels to reveal the full extent of child abuse in Australia and to build strong social coalitions of government, community, business and individuals to tackle the problem. Families Australia again calls for the Commonwealth to take a leadership role in developing a national strategy', he said.

'But, at the local level we can all do something to help, for example, by including single parent families in community life and encouraging families to work more closely together even if there are problems at times', he said.

'Urgent attention is also needed to address the fact that the out-of-home care system is under increasing pressure. Ever increasing numbers of children are entering the system, but there is an acute and net loss of carers. Governments need to work together and look for a wider range of viable solutions to support and assist these children and their families'.

Families Australia is Australia's peak national not-for-profit organisation specifically concerned with family-related issues.

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