



For immediate release

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Hold your outrage and embrace your humanity

When our television screens and newspapers are filled with horror stories of child abuse and murders, incidents of child sex trafficking and child soldiers, the easiest thing to do is tune out.

I'm grateful we have so many committed people working in the child protection sector who not only tune in to our local issues, but spend their working lives trying to be part of the solution.

It is not an easy job, and we cannot do it alone. Child Protection Week, which will be held from 7 – 13 September 2014 is a good opportunity to ask the wider community to play their part. It is not by chance that the theme for the week is 'protecting children is everyone's business'.

In the child protection sector, we know that perpetration of abuse is complicated. Way more complicated than I could ever hope to denote in a short commentary.

We know that a vast number of families who are known to the statutory child protection system for issues of child abuse, domestic and family violence or neglect also suffer poverty and many associated factors and require significant assistance. The needs of each of these families differ and assessment is crucial in determining the most appropriate and safe way for intervention and assistance.

The majority of parents become parents with optimism and no intent ever to do harm. Some then struggle in this endeavor. Most parents, regardless of their financial or social circumstances understand that parenting is difficult and life changing. As such, assistance through each stage of this journey is essential for all parents and families. This is why it is so heartening that in Queensland post the Carmody Inquiry that family support and intervention is so high on the agenda for child protection. Such a shift in perspective requires a shift in culture to ensure that all parents in need of assistance receive the right service at the right time to be assisted to parent effectively. It is also essential that in providing these services that no stigma be attached. Most parents experience difficulties at least some of the time. Some have support networks such as extended family and friends, others do not.

What we also know is that responses to child abuse and domestic and family violence need to ensure that the perpetrator is held to account and offered significant opportunities including therapeutic intervention for change. Whilst this occurs non offending partners or former partners and children need to be assisted in their safety and in their healing.

I recently received an invitation to a training session about Abuse on Contact. The flyer for this training stated that: "Abuse on Contact" is harm that occurs when victims, both adult and child, of Family and Domestic Violence are exposed to on-going violence post separation as a result of the legal requirement to comply with family law orders, parenting plans or other

agreements that allow or promote time between the children and the perpetrator of the violence”. It then further stated: “Recent deaths in Australia of children whilst having contact with their non-protective parent have highlighted the importance of being able to respond to this issue.”

I felt I should attend to assist the organisations and practitioners with whom I work daily. By the time I came to register, the training was full. Such was the demand for the information by practitioners grappling with this issue. Training bursting at its seams in the aim to correct a major disconnect in our broader system of child protection.

Those of us who work in child protection are ever hopeful that we are moving forward to align our laws, culture and practices to ultimately reduce, or hopefully eradicate instances of abuse which cause us such outrage.

We need to hold our outrage about children being harmed, not to ever excuse or ignore any abuses but to ensure that we act with humanity, the acceptance that everyone makes mistakes and the knowledge that those who cross criminal lines will be brought to account and others without malice can be supported to improve their behaviours and enhance their parenting. With significant support from organisations and the programs they offer, those who struggle and lack the resources that some in our community take for granted, can flourish. Such assistance can ensure that they become productive parents and positive role models for those they love most.

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