

MEDIA RELEASE
20 January 2005



CHILD ABUSE REPORTS DOUBLE IN 5 YEARS

The latest report into child abuse released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed that the number of **AUSTRALIAN** children suspected of suffering emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or neglect **has more than doubled in five years.**

"The big question is 'what can be done about it'" says Adam Blakester, Executive Officer of NAPCAN (the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect). "These latest child abuse statistics clearly demonstrate that child abuse is the most serious social problem in Australia, yet somehow it continues to slip off the public's agenda. **Protecting children is everyone's business** and we, need to be encouraging everyone, within their communities, to make it their business".

The Child Protection Australia 2003-04 Report showed that last year almost 220,000 children were suspected of suffering emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or neglect. This means a child is being reported as abused or neglected every 2½ minutes in Australia.

The Report identified that children most at risk come from families who may:

- Have low incomes and be financially stressed
- Suffer from social isolation
- Have less support from immediate families.

"The only way we can really address this problem is by encouraging a 'whole of community' approach. And there are some very simple first steps:

- Ease the financial burden – pass on clothing, books, toys
- Don't let these families be isolated – invite them to social events, stop to say hello
- Support parents – offer to lend a hand, small things make a difference
- Connect with kids – say g'day, listen to them, invite them to social events".

We should not only support children who are in need right now, but also to invest in prevention by making the wellbeing and protection of children an inherent community value. Only by doing this can we diminish the number of children being harmed over the longer term", said Blakester.

NAPCAN's vision is communities protecting children from abuse and neglect. We have been building collaborative approaches between communities, government, and non-government organisations for over 17 years.

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