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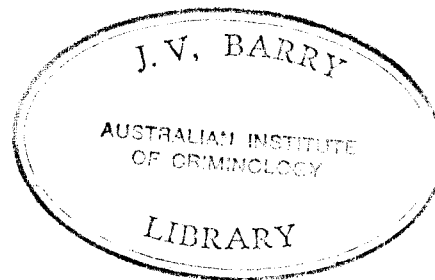
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**Paedophilia, child sexual abuse and  
practical approaches to prevention**

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## **Paedophilia, child sexual abuse and practical approaches to prevention**

### **Introduction to the problem**

In the perceptions of a large majority of the Australian community, a paedophile is a dirty old man, a stranger who offers lollies to children to inveigle them away from their homes and families for unspeakable purposes. The general public, and indeed much of the literature, tends to lump all forms of sexual abuse of children under the name 'paedophilia' and to classify all abusers as paedophiles (Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:222-3). Almost invariably we have assumed that the perpetrator is male, and a stranger.

Responsible parents for many years have therefore attempted to arm their children with warnings about 'stranger danger', especially strangers offering rides, gifts or interesting activities likely to draw the child away from the safe and familiar. More knowledgeable parents and, in recent years, educational authorities have instructed children in protective behaviours such as 'good touch, bad touch' and 'it's all right to say "no"'. Yet increasingly we are realising that, while few children today are likely to accept lifts and sweets from strangers, sexual abuse of children in our society continues to be a problem of apparently enormous, though relatively uncharted, scope, against which children appear to have few defences.

One of the main reasons undoubtedly is our propensity to confuse stereotypes with definitions. Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are not necessarily dirty old men. Many in fact are relatively young, some in their teens. They may be apparently respectable and respected members of the community. Though a very high percentage of offenders are male, some are female. Much child sexual abuse occurs in situations in which we assume children are safe - at home, at school, in care or in an

otherwise familiar environment. Clearly, we need to rethink the techniques on which we have relied for the protection of our children.

Understanding the motivation for and characteristics of an abusive act is critically important to society's ability to prevent, contain and control child abuse of any kind. In particular, our ability to protect our children requires us to appreciate the different circumstances which may lead a child into danger of sexual abuse, and the differences between the *modus operandi* of a genuine paedophile and the conditions which may give rise to other forms of child sexual abuse.

In a strictly pedantic sense, while the word 'paedophile' may be used loosely to include any adult having sexual contact with a child, active paedophiles are an extreme, compulsive form of child sexual offender: they troll for victims, they stalk, they become experts in the identification and attraction of potential victims and they almost invariably feel a need to move on to new conquests. They may cultivate the parents, even enter into a marriage, to gain access to the children. Others may be reclusive, relying on long-distance networks for their contacts with children. They are found at all levels and in all classes of society. Because they usually do not regard their activities as wrong, and tend to see themselves as the victims of social and legal short-sightedness, upbringing, conscience and social mores have little hold over them.

Paedophilia is currently recognised as a global problem which police forces generally are finding extremely difficult to combat. This must be attributed in some part at least to police and judicial practices, which are of necessity circumspect and make it difficult to investigate allegations of paedophilia. The nature of the offence also means that to obtain sufficient evidence for conviction is often a very time-consuming and arduous task. The result is that the cases of paedophilia which come to public attention, and on which the general public builds its attitudes towards paedophilia, are very few and tend to be the extreme and often horrific ones.

The serious cultural taboos in many societies against sexual relationships with children, paradoxically, add to the difficulty of pursuing a case

through the judicial system. Among a large proportion of the population and even among the most conscientious police, for social and possibly even subconscious cultural reasons paedophilia may be a hidden problem, the parameters of which are not well known or, if known, not easily admitted (Sereny 1984:xix-xxii, 119-25).

The problem also lies in the nature of paedophilia, which at its most effective often replicates good parental and child care practices, winning the confidence of the child and in some instances orchestrating its willing participation in the relationship. The skilled paedophile, on the surface, is not only indistinguishable from the average law-abiding citizen but frequently appears to be a shining example of adult dedication to the well-being of children. It is difficult if not impossible to differentiate between the person who genuinely is devoted to children for their own sake, and the person who is using the appearance of such devotion, whether genuine or imitation, to obtain personal sexual satisfaction.

Partly, of course, the difficulty of combatting paedophilia also lies in the nature of young children: their physical and emotional vulnerability to adult power, their sensitivity to warmth and affection, their intense loyalty to those they regard as friends, and their frequent lack of certainty about what is right and wrong. Where these intrinsic components of childhood are exploited by an adult for the satisfaction of an adult sexual need, beyond the child's experience, the capacity for long-term damage to the child is enormous.

Australia, by comparison with some overseas countries, is not yet well sensitised to the problems of child abuse generally. Australians tend to regard paedophilia as a mysterious sex crime against children, associated with kidnapping, violence, pornography, child slavery, and malignant religious rituals. This is not necessarily the case. While paedophiles have been known to exploit their natural children sexually, to take pornographic records of their young victims, to pay for their pleasure and to involve children in curious rituals, a sexual interest in pre-pubescent children need not involve any of these activities. Indeed, it need not involve any physical sexual contact at all. On the other hand, the actions

of some paedophiles are so calculated, repetitive and violent that they tend to resemble the cyclic pattern of the serial killer. Unlike many and possibly most of the paedophile fraternity, these 'serial paedophiles' are likely to act violently, oppressively or flagrantly exploitatively towards their young victim or victims and may cause their death. They are, however, among the rarest sub-groups of the type.

### **Child sexual abuse in social context**

The sexual abuse of children, and the taboos which usually accompany it, go back to the roots of history. Protection of children prior to the last hundred years or so, however, was generally a family responsibility. Since the privacy of the family was a paramount concern, abused children were easily overlooked. Nonetheless, sexual deviance involving children was viewed with particular seriousness. In its early settlement days, penalties were harsher in Australia than elsewhere in the British Empire. The *Criminal Law Amendment Act 1883* provided the death penalty for carnal knowledge of a female under ten years of age (Grabosky 1977:92).

Attitudes towards the use of children, male or female, for sexual purposes vary between as well as within cultures. Some, such as several on the Indian sub-continent and in the Middle East, freely accept the use of young children for sexual purposes prior to their physical maturity, while others, such as some Asian countries, may accept this abuse, however reluctantly, for its commercial returns.

In addition to such on-going cultural factors, in the post-World War II period we have also seen major changes to our lifestyle. Two of these post-war changes in particular stand out for their possible contribution to the apparently increasing spread of child sexual abuse of any kind - the communications revolution and the emergence of the working family (single or two-parent) as the dominant family pattern.

The communications revolution, with the enormous increase it brought to visual realism and to entertainment in privacy, has greatly facilitated paedophilic fantasising and may also have stimulated the global market

for child pornography and other paedophilic activities generally. The working family has changed many children's support systems (at least on an hour for hour basis) from primarily family to primarily school/peer group contact, and has thereby greatly increased the accessibility of children to persons seeking paedophilic contacts. The effects of both social changes on child protection may be exacerbated by a third factor: the enormously increased mobility of modern Australian society, and the consequent decline of the Australian extended family and the Australian suburb as the centre of family and community life.

Sexual abuse of children basically involves 'developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, are unable to give their informed consent to and that violate the social taboos of family roles' (Schechter and Roberge, cited in Oates 1992:186). It thus includes, but goes far beyond, the scope of recurrent and compulsive paedophilia.

While paedophiles are usually seen as predatory strangers, a very high proportion of child victims are sexually abused by family, friends, relatives or babysitters within the supposed safety of their own homes. In one study, 85 per cent of child sexual abuse perpetrators were found to be known to the victims. Another reported that 79 per cent of boy victims knew their abusers. Yet another study found that fathers and stepfathers accounted for 7 or 8 per cent of cases, other family members accounted for roughly 40 per cent of cases, while 50 per cent involved other people known to the children. This left approximately 2 or 3 per cent of cases where the victim was molested by a stranger (Carney 1989:118).

Child sexual abuse at its most extreme may have horrific consequences far beyond those normally associated with paedophiles: incest; theft of children, some of whom are never recovered; adoption of infants for long term sexual purposes or for future sale as sex slaves or prostitutes; the use of children for satanic and other inverted religious or quasi-religious practices; and, in recent years, the horrifying picture of children adopted, bought or stolen for body parts to meet the growing demand for biological material in medical science (Halstead & Wilson 1991).

Active paedophiles are the tip of the iceberg. The much wider group of child abusers includes those who never physically touch a child sexually, but who rely on child pornography, child prostitution, the use of children in voyeuristic displays and similar practices for their satisfaction. It also includes those who have no personal compulsion towards sexual use of children, but who cater to the paedophile as part of the much wider child sex market. Persons involved in such abuses may be entirely normal in their own sexual orientation. The market for child sex titillation may be used as much by the bored sybarite looking for a new thrill as by the paedophile.

### **What is paedophilia?**

Paedophilia is one form of child sexual abuse - a paraphilia, or compulsive responsiveness to an unusual and personally or socially unacceptable stimulus. The essential elements of paedophilia, according to the reputable Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (D.S.M.III) are

*'the act or fantasy of engaging in sexual activity with prepubertal children as a repeatedly preferred or exclusive method of achieving sexual excitement...Isolated sexual acts with children do not warrant the diagnosis of Pedophilia'* (cited in Sturgess 1985:41)(author's italics).

According to this definition, the essence of paedophilia is the recurrence of sexual excitement associated with children. Thus it would apply to the person who repeatedly uses child pornography to obtain sexual excitement, but not to the incestuous parent who has repeated sexual contact with a child as a form of rape or revenge on the spouse or partner. It would apply to the person who fantasises in solitude, but not to the person who occasionally abuses a child sexually in the course of obtaining material for child prostitution or the pornography market.

The diagnostic definition, however, has its own limits. Such delineation may be useful for the psychologist or clinician who is treating an adult who has been involved in an apparently paedophilic relationship, but depends too closely on the attitudes and beliefs of the perpetrator to be particularly useful for child protection.

Paedophiles themselves have a problem in defining their activity. Lansdown, responding to radical homosexual moves following the Fifth National Homosexual Conference in Melbourne in 1979, reports a homosexual article in the *Gay Community News* (Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1980) which for political reasons sought to establish a 'standard name' for 'men who love boys', on the grounds that 'Until we agree on a standard nomenclature, there will be no possibility of a gay-pederast liberation'. By the end of 1980 Australian homosexuals defined a paedophile fairly narrowly, as a man who practised or sought sex with a boy. The act of paedophilia thus colloquially at least became the art or act of man-boy sex (Lansdown 1984:99). Like the psychological definition, however, this omits too many aspects of paedophilia to be entirely adequate for preventative purposes.

Paedophilic interests may occur among postpubescent adolescents as well as adults, either male or female, though they are rare in women. Paedophile contacts may be homosexual, heterosexual, or occasionally bisexual, and may involve real or fantasized contact (Hunter 1990: 3-8; Money 1991:461).

Paedophiles may exhibit a preference for female or male children, or both. The majority of victims, however, are female in a ratio of 2:1. Where the contact is heterosexual most victims fall between the ages of 6 and 12 years, peaking at between 8 and 11 years, while the peak ages of victims of the same sex fall between 12 and 15 years (Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:247). Actual sexual penetration is infrequent. To this extent, paedophilia is no more dangerous, and may be less traumatic than some other forms of child sexual abuse.



Definitions of paedophilia may or may not include man/post-pubescent/adolescent boy relationships, otherwise known as ephebophilia. Puberty, however, provides a generally accepted differentiation point for victims which is not reliant on concepts more difficult to pin down, such as the mental age of the child and the child's sexual rights at a particular age. The pre-pubescent child has no real sexual frame of reference within which he or she can interpret the sexual behaviour of an adult; the adolescent has. The 'social taboos' also tend to operate more rigorously in the protection of pre-pubescent children. Pre-pubescent children in our society are generally not considered able to make an informed choice about sexual matters, whereas the exploratory sexuality of adolescents, on the other hand, means that the issues of consent and harm in a relationship with an adult (See Fierman 1990:54-59) are more easily blurred.

Wilson's book about Clarence Osborne, the homosexual who boasted some 2500 conquests amongst the young teenagers he favoured (Wilson 1981), makes the difficulties of dealing with this type of situation frighteningly clear. Though Osborne was a homosexual ephebophile rather than a paedophile, the difference between him and most paedophiles was a matter of skill, not of ethics.

Osborne was not caught because of any complaint from the young boys with whom he had a relationship. Many if not most of them appear to have had a genuine regard for the man and some at least were extremely grateful for the interest he took in them and the help he gave. Osborne gave, as well as received, sexual satisfaction - he paid his boys in a coin certain to bring them back to him. But at the same time he was constantly trolling for new lovers, dropping them quickly and mercilessly ('I simply denied them sex') when he tired of them. Osborne's not inconsiderable skills in this regard would have made him the perfect go-between for organised recruitment of youngsters had he been less of a 'loner'; and for this reason alone the Osbornes of this world cannot be ignored.

### **When is a paedophile dangerous?**

The question of whether the relationship with Osborne was, however, in the final analysis, good or bad for the youths involved, and, indeed, for Osborne himself, is unlikely ever to be resolved (despite Wilson's valiant attempt), simply because there is no way that we can ever determine the critical point - whether those 2500 boys were better, or worse, persons and partners *post* Osborne than they would have been without him. The issues where pre-pubescent children are involved are much more clear-cut.

The questions of whether or not a child had, or could, consent to a paedophilic contact, and whether or not he or she was harmed, are complex and often emotive ones. Wilson (1981:134) argues that a legal age of consent is an arbitrary point. It is - though a biological turning point associated with a legal age of consent is not. Some have suggested that the amount of harm to the child is uncertain, even non-existent (see also Cerkovnik 1985:692). Recent research, however, suggests a much higher level of harm from paedophilic contacts that do not include sexual penetration than previously was thought to be the case (Oates 1992:187). The psychological harm has been found to be particularly damaging where the adult concerned is in a close position of trust in relation to the child. Hunter (1990:21) takes this even further, suggesting that even if a child is not actually touched in a sexual way, viewing or hearing others being sexually abused can be extremely traumatic.

What is the critical point, ie when is a paedophile dangerous? Clearly both to people who believe that child sexuality should not exist before puberty, and those who recognise child sexuality but consider that it should be left to the child's natural development, a lover of children is dangerous when he or, in rare cases, she intervenes in a child's sexual development in any way. In other words it is the sexual element in the relationship which many - indeed most - in our society condemn.

Questions of the degree of harm and dangerousness in sexual contacts between a child and an older person are particularly thorny ones and are not easily amenable to objective investigation, so that most conclusions

can only be subjective. If the child says he/she felt guilty, is such guilt harmful or beneficial in the circumstances of the case? If the child reports later that the warmth, emotional development and experience gained was beneficial and outweighed the feelings of guilt, is this sufficient reason to excuse the early sexual intervention?

These difficult questions are pre-empted, or do not arise, where society takes the view that adult intervention in child sexuality should never reach the point of physical sexual contact, or indeed any sexual contact that is based on the needs of the adult rather than on those of the child. Whatever the reasoning, however, conclusions about whether children should or should not be permitted to enter into sexual relationships with an adult involve moral and cultural judgements which, in any event, are by their nature unarguable.

While enormous scope for differences of opinion exists between the view that consensual sexual relations with adults do not harm children, and the view that all children are harmed in one way or another (see Carney 1989:109-111), there can be little argument that many children are harmed, and some very seriously harmed, by their involvement in such activities. The lack of unequivocal evidence that all paedophilic relationships are harmful to the child, however, does not affect the right of the community to make rules and conditions for the protection of all of its children from paedophiles, even if some children superficially seem to be unharmed by a particular practice. Communities have every right to legislate against actions which are not in accordance with their value system or culture, and many reinforce cultural mores with legal ones. Our culture accepts - by and large - homosexuality and even to some extent freely chosen relationships between adolescent boys and homosexual men. On the other hand, it regards overt sexual activity between adults and pre-pubescent children as abhorrent. The turning point, then, between acceptance and illegality in our society is the point at which the paedophile's 'warm interest' in children results in contact with or exposure of a child's genitalia or sexualised physical contact of any kind involving a child.

## **Myths and taboos about child sexual abuse and paedophilia**

Society's myths and taboos are often a useful guide to society's accumulated knowledge, and may be historically warranted even if no longer always factually correct. That the use of pre-pubescent children for adult sexual purposes is one of the strongest taboos in our society, reflects a Darwinian belief that it poses a threat to the survival of the species. Such beliefs are not lightly overturned.

The common myths about paedophilia and child sexual abuse, however, demonstrate more clearly than anything else the fears and the confusion that surround the subject and that often distort the allocation of resources to deal with it. The number of such myths has produced several collections, summarised below:

*Myth:* Children are in greatest danger from strangers 'trolling' for children for sexual purposes.

*Fact:* 75 to 95 per cent of offenders are known to and may be related to the child.

*Myth:* Minor offenders are likely to progress to more violent, even homicidal crimes.

*Fact:* Most paedophiles are truly distressed at the thought of hurting a child and are unlikely to become more violent than they already are; only a small percentage are dangerous.

*Myth:* Child molesters are lustful, oversexed and a risk to everyone

*Fact:* A majority of offenders are under-sexed, passive and non-aggressive

*Myth:* Children easily fantasize, make up stories, and lie about sexual activities with adults.

*Fact:* Young children cannot make up sexually explicit information of which they have no knowledge and need to be exposed to it before they can describe it. Indicators of cases where an adult tries to get a child to report sexual assault falsely are the child's inability to describe or illustrate the act explicitly, or a grossly inconsistent account.

*Myth:* Sexual abuse of a child within the family is usually an isolated, one-time incident, probably caused by family stresses, and unlikely to be repeated.

*Fact:* Child sexual abuse, particularly with paedophiles, usually develops over a period of time and occurs repeatedly.

*Myth:* Non-violent sexual behaviour between an adult and a child is not emotionally damaging to the child.

*Fact:* Although child sexual abuse may involve subtle rather than overt force, nearly all victims will experience confusion, shame, guilt, anger and lowered self-esteem, even if they reveal no outward signs.

*Myth:* Child molesters are 'dirty old men'.

*Fact:* Child molesters come in all shapes, sizes and ages; one recent study found that 80 per cent had committed their first offence before the age of thirty; many are in their late teens.

*Myth:* Children are naturally seductive and often provoke and seduce adults into sexual acts.

*Fact:* Seductive behaviour may be the result but is never the cause of sexual abuse. Even where the adult offender considers a child to be provocative, the responsibility lies with the adult offender.

*Myth:* If children did not want it they could have said 'no'

*Fact:* Children generally do not question adult behaviour. They can be coerced by affectionate words, bribes, threats and use of adult authority.

*Myth:* Boys are not often abused and when they are it is by male homosexuals.

*Fact:* Boys are abused almost as often as girls and most child sexual abuse is perpetrated by men who are heterosexual. Many child abusers will use both boys and girls.

*Myth:* Women do not sexually abuse boys - a sexual relationship between a woman and a boy is natural.

*Fact:* If a woman uses a child for her own sexual satisfaction it is still an abuse of adult power and can still harm the child.

*Myth:* Where a man turns to children for sexual satisfaction it is because his wife drives him to it.

*Fact:* Most men in unhappy home situations do not turn to children for sexual satisfaction; About 50 per cent of molesters are married or otherwise heterosexually active; where children are the sex object it is usually because they are the preferred sex object.

*Myth:* When a sexual relationship between an adult and a child is loving and caring it does not harm the child and may benefit him or her.

*Fact:* A relationship which sets a child against the mores of the society in which he or she must live is likely to damage the child's ability to survive in that society.

(derived from Hunter, 1990:21-2; Carmody, 1988:21; Carney 1989:118-9; Cerkovnik 1985:692-3)

### **Focussing on prevention**

A preventative perspective requires a definition which encompasses the key points which may precede sexual contact in a paedophilic relationship, and which also takes into account the effects of the wider child sex market. We need to look at paedophilia in its broader sense rather than its narrower sense, as any contact involving some element of sexual or quasi-sexual interest in children on an adult's part, even if this is not subsequently expressed in physical sexual contact.

Paedophiles have sometimes been characterised as pathetic people who are unable to relate normally to other adults and whose charm to children is frequently a product of their own immaturity. One study found that 5 per cent or less of paedophiles are psychotic, and approximately 29 per cent may have anti-social personalities. A majority of paedophiles, however, have no psychiatric illness apart from their obvious interest in children. Paedophilic behaviour and child abuse is purposeful behaviour, and is a choice rather than a symptom of a medical or psychiatric disorder (*Forum* 3, 4, 1991:20).

Some writers have warned against the use of much of the available data on paedophile traits and profiles (Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:222-7). Research into the characteristics of paedophiles is limited, and to date any taxonomy based on personality traits displayed by incarcerated paedophiles can only be regarded as unreliable, since prison records in most Australian states do not differentiate between types of child abusers for statistical purposes.

With the above *caveat* in mind, however, the question remains whether prevention of this form of child abuse can realistically be achieved by focussing on actual or potential perpetrators. The short answer is that it probably cannot. Paedophiles tend to regard the world, rather than themselves, as out of step and can be difficult to rehabilitate either through prison or medical systems, even when lengthy programs are compulsory following incarceration. Some programs, such as castration and hormone therapy, have been found to be not entirely reliable in achieving their aims (see, for example, Fox 1991). Any one-on-one scheme such as individual psychotherapy is relatively costly to administer (Cerkovnik 1985:693). Though current advances in treatment which employ broad-based techniques in a group setting have reduced the high rate of recidivism in convicted offenders, the relatively high number of offences committed on average prior to first conviction makes post-conviction treatment, however, successful, of limited overall value for prevention.

As a preliminary to examining the usefulness of various other methods of protection, it is worth looking at the several levels or grades which could be said to apply to persons who use children repetitively in a sexual way. They are:

- . *'hard-core' or active paedophilia*, where the adult actively pursues satisfaction for his sexual attraction to children by physical, sexual contact with them;
- . *'quiescent' paedophilia*, where the adult uses secondary or indirect means such as child pornography or voyeurism, possibly

accompanied by masturbation, to satisfy his sexual needs, but does not engage in direct child sexual abuse;

*'situational' paedophilia*, where the adult is not exclusively attracted to children and may not be sexually attracted to children at all, but may use a child for sexual satisfaction in a particular situation: in the absence of, or as a weapon against, an adult partner, for example, (it could be argued that much incest and other domestic sexual abuse of children probably falls into this category though it is often difficult to differentiate between the compulsive 'lover' of children and the repetitive 'user' of children); or where children are offered for prostitution; and

*'market' paedophilia*, where the primary motivation for the sexual abuse of children in any way is an economic one and where the adult may or may not engage in active sexual contact with a child to that end.

Of these, the two areas most likely to involve organised criminal activity are active paedophilia and market paedophilia. Under Williams and Finkelhor's (1992) categorisation of incestuous parents, active paedophilia would include 'sexually preoccupied' men who feel a sexual interest in a child from the time the child is an infant; and the 'adolescent regressives' whose interest commences when the child is at or near puberty and replicates the feelings of an adolescent himself. The active paedophile is clearly the one to whom police and criminal intelligence operations are most appropriately directed, and most effectively pursued. This is not necessarily the case with the other categories.

'Quiescent' paedophilia is particularly dangerous because there is little in it *per se* which constitutes a crime or which marks the paedophile as someone to avoid, until or unless sexual contact occurs. We are not talking about prohibiting friendship, substitute parents, sexless cuddles, and warm glow feelings. At the same time, 'quiescent' paedophilia will frequently involve the use of child pornography, stimulation from nude displays from children or other forms of 'hands-off' sexual gratification, despite the absence of physical contact, which certainly places children directly or indirectly at risk of psychological if not physical harm. The



ability of police intelligence to investigate in this situation, however, is limited and arguably not a cost-effective use of scarce police resources.

Situational paedophilia occurs where sexual contact with a child is less a consequence of a sexual attraction to children than an effect, even a side-effect, of the combination of an indiscriminate individual and a particular set of circumstances. Often it occurs as part of the domestic/family violence scenario, though it may also be related to larger problem areas such as the crisis of aboriginal identity in some areas and the disenchantment of young people with society in others. It may include 'instrumental sexual gratifiers' (Williams & Finkelhor 1992:2) who use a child for gratification while fantasising about some other partner, or 'angry retaliators', where the primary focus of the abuse of the child is anger against a partner or other person. It may also include the individual who, bored with conventional sex, will 'try anything once'; or who, in a situation where children are offered for prostitution, has no qualms about using them. Because situational paedophilia tends more often, however, to be family- or group-related, it may need a perspective which is likely to be outside the rigid parameters imposed by the judicial system to a greater or lesser extent.

The market category almost certainly is the most widespread and to that extent may be the most dangerous to children, since it can involve them in a wide range of abusive activities. The dangers of child pornography go beyond the fantasies of the 'quiescent' paedophile. One significant effect is that the exchange of such material between paedophiles provides reinforcement for the paedophile's view of society which in itself can provide the motivation for further exploitation. Like many other forms of advertising, it can also create its own demand. It is also dangerous because the risks to children from market paedophilia may come from anywhere, and are most likely to be in the home, school and leisure situations within which children operate.

## **Prevention approaches**

### *The criminal justice system*

The option which first springs to mind in dealing with paedophilia and other forms of child abuse is almost invariably more, or more knowledgeable, police and judicial intervention. Prevention through the normal judicial course of arrest and conviction, however, is effective primarily in that it takes the paedophile out of circulation for some time. Yet convictions are notoriously difficult and high cost to obtain, and frequently result in a relatively light sentence (Carney 1989:106).

One major problem in prosecuting child sexual abuse cases is that of the availability and credibility of a child's evidence. Accuracy of the child's memory, suggestibility and susceptibility are a particular problem. Developmental experts take the view, however, that young children cannot make up explicit information about an event which they have not experienced (Hunter, 1990:21). Spontaneous accounts of the event by children have been found to be very reliable, but repeated questioning - almost unavoidable in our existing system - may nonetheless result in inaccuracies in a child's report. Another influential factor may be the child's receptivity to the perception of the paedophile -in particular, the paedophile's common claim that the event was one of mutual consent, and the child a consenting partner.

The general tendency in the judicial system to expect at least some untruthfulness from witnesses, and to rely on the mechanics of the court to sort out fact from fiction, has led to a need for new rules for children's evidence in child abuse cases. Attempts to deal with this have ranged from provision of colouring books about court to child witnesses, to video evidence. Few if any, however, have addressed the basic question of whether the court is always the most appropriate place to handle child abuse problems.

### *Direct child education*

Further problems may arise in trying to develop techniques which enable a child to deal directly with a paedophilic approach. Prevention has been

directed towards allowing paedophiles as little access as possible and as little opportunity as possible to interfere with children. Much of the effort to date has been of the 'stranger danger' kind whereby children are taught to say no where they are uncomfortable with a situation, and has concentrated on touching.

These techniques have limited value. First, a child may be provided with information on sex that may be too sophisticated for his or her cognitive level, and which the child cannot handle. By comparison, a child will take in any new information or experience offered by his environment, regardless of quality or content, when the cognitive structure is ready (Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:156).

Information on sexual 'does' and 'don'ts' can serve to confuse rather than help. Moreover a program attempting to teach a child what 'good', 'bad' or other feelings should mean is giving children a predetermined set of rules which are limiting and possibly inaccurate. The concept of being a 'good' child is in itself a potentially dangerous one. Often it includes adult credos which serve the paedophile's purpose - to respect the authority of the adult, for example, or to trust anyone older, which may leave the child without the self-confidence or will either to defend himself or to seek further guidance.

#### *Situational prevention*

In the past, many preventative measures have aimed at reducing the access of the adult perpetrators of abuse and neglect to children. These measures have included foster parenting, parenting skills classes, hotlines for parents and children, home nursing, foster care and special daycare programs. Most preventative methods, as Rogers and Wrightsman emphasised in 1978, are based on the concepts of nurturance or self-determination. Both approaches seek to benefit children but are based on essentially different conceptions of childhood (cited in Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:162-3).

### *Indirect methods*

Some preventative programs may be effective indirectly rather than directly. In a study conducted by the Kinsey Institute in 1965, involving 1356 convicted sex offenders, alcohol played a large part among the men who used force (6.6 per cent). Two thirds of the offenders were drunk at the time of the offence. A later study, reporting on 64 children examined in the Emergency room at the Philadelphia Sex Offender and Rape Victim Centre, noted that in over half the cases the assault occurred when the offender had been drinking (Wakefield & Underwager et al 1988:250). While alcohol cannot be said to cause paedophilic tendencies, there can be little doubt that its importance in releasing inhibitions and in overcoming socially imposed constraints could make the difference between fantasy and acting out for some paedophiles. Server intervention programs to reduce excessive drinking, for example, have significantly reduced levels of violence in some areas and could have a flow on effect with those paedophiles who would normally constrain their urges were they not under the influence of alcohol.

### **A new approach?**

Existing approaches to the prevention of paedophilic crime have tended to be relatively high cost, low return exercises, whether they target paedophiles and incipient paedophiles or vulnerable children. They also have very little predictive capacity, in terms of their ability to pick up early warning signs, and limited transferability, relying primarily on educational campaigns of one kind or another and on the ability of parents and caregivers to be constantly alert to potentially risky situations.

Many child protection schemes to date have focussed on teaching the child to protect itself. This, however, is often very difficult, costly, and may be out of step with the child's developmental needs. Programs which try to teach small children to make judgments about 'good' or 'bad' matters which are conceptually beyond their stage of development may not in fact help the child to escape from a threatening situation.

Programs designed to educate and inform the community at large about child abuse, to educate parents about effective parenting, to assist the police in identifying paedophiles or to help the child victims negotiate through the judicial system are also often extremely expensive. Whether they are the most cost-effective way to go needs a closer examination of the alternatives than has yet been the case.

One of the most useful directions currently being employed, though with variable levels of success to date, is the integration of groups dealing with child protection through the sharing of information and the coordination of related activities such as police, hospital and welfare involvement in child abuse cases. Though coordination is a much-abused concept and attempts to coordinate different areas of operation have often floundered on issues of ownership and divergent responsibilities, it is particularly important where a lack of effective coordination may allow criminal activity to slip through the cracks.

There is also considerable scope in an approach to the prevention of paedophilic crime through programs which use common childhood needs to enable children to avoid the point at which sexual contact occurs or to bring into the open occasions when problems arise. Considerable scope also exists for examination of 'proxy programs' - programs which while ostensibly addressing one problem may have significant flow-on effects in another. Children's 'help-lines', for example, though primarily a counselling and support service, can also provide valuable data about many aspects of family and social life.

Such programs, however, need to take into account the broad picture of the society in which children grow up, and to be tailored to broad social needs. For the 1990s, it could be argued that programs for the protection of children would need to recognise and be responsive to the wider issues of deep recession, the effect on the family and social structure, and the role of schools.

Children in the 1990s can be very isolated. Increased mobility has meant that grandparents, aunts and uncles and other extended family are often

out of reach or not accessible as an alternative to home if the child has problems with the parents. The dominance of working families, either single parent families and two-parent working families, and the consequent 'empty suburbs' has meant that many children have few adult contacts close to them during the day and are more reliant on school, peer group and busy pre- or after-school carers. The recession has resulted in severe limitations on school resources. Teachers are rarely in a position to provide the individual attention and care needed by a child at risk. Parents may not be aware of, or willing to report, the problem. And no government can afford sufficient numbers of social workers or police to check at random on every home with children often enough to identify and care for cases of child sexual abuse.

Information about crimes of child sexual abuse, wherever they occur, in most cases has to come from within the family - either through a parent or, if a parent is reluctant to come forward, through the abused child or its siblings. The most reliable evidence of much child sexual abuse, however - that of the child itself - tends to be disguised if not entirely hidden behind our society's credo of the privacy of the home and family. If a family member is involved, the child itself may be the only person who can alert people who are able to help to the problem. The important factor is to make sure that this information can come out.

Child protection needs to go back to basics.

One of a child's most important basic needs is security. Three basic premisses or basic childhood needs related to security are perhaps so obvious that we tend to overlook them:

- children, like all small animals, need a 'safe place' - a place that they can run to if they are frightened or confused; a familiar place; a place that they can hide; a substitute 'safe place' if the primary safe place (home, parents, family) is violated; a place that they can feel safe;

children also need someone to confide in - someone who will listen to them no matter what; someone who can explain things that they find hard to understand; someone who will help them to decide what is 'good' and what is 'bad'; someone who will take a burden that is too heavy off little shoulders and fix up things that go wrong; and

finally, children need security - someone to watch over them when they are not aware of incipient danger; an 'early warning system', as it were, either within or outside the family.

### *The safe place*

For most children, home is their 'safe place' when they have problems outside the home, and a place within the home - the bedroom, the bed, the cubby-house, a parent's lap or contact with a pet - is the particular 'safe place' within the home. Where troubles at home cause distress the 'safe place' may be a friend's house or a relative. It is where this hierarchy of common 'safe places' does not exist, is violated, or is unavailable at the time of trouble, that the child is particularly vulnerable to approaches from acquaintances or even strangers who appear to provide the warmth and security of the 'safe place'. Since crimes both by and against children commonly occur within the neighbourhood environment, local government authorities and local police crime prevention units clearly could have an important part to play in the development of alternative 'safe places' for the children of their area.

The Neighbourhood Watch program, with its 'Safe Houses', to some extent has recognised this in its attempt to provide safe places to which anyone in difficulties outside the home can seek shelter. The 'Safe Houses', however, as yet are a long way from the type of 'safe place' a child retreats to on a regular basis in times of stress. Often they are no more than a sign on a gate, unfamiliar, a place of last resort. They offer little help to the child who may be abused in a place of purported safety, such as the child care centre or school, or to the child who is worried about going home.

### *Someone to talk to*

Attempts to teach young children to recognise an abusive approach and to decide for themselves how to handle it often place a burden on children which they are not developmentally or emotionally ready to handle. If they have no trusted adult in the home or school environment to talk to about their concerns, however, even a sympathetic voice over the telephone may help. From a very early age children have shown themselves to be fascinated by the telephone and fairly skilled at using it. Children's 'help lines', both in Australia and overseas, have reported floods of calls from uncertain children about an enormous range of concerns, including abusive situations.

The communications revolution, however, goes far beyond the telephone, and its effect on young children in the last generation or so has been considerable in other ways. Today, books and the written word have been largely replaced by visual learning through television and video. Long distance relationships that may be difficult to maintain with relatives living elsewhere are often much easier with favourite television personalities. Even very young children often respond with enthusiasm to invitations to write to or ring their favourite television program.

This wide-ranging access through the television and the telephone has the potential to enable children from a relatively early age and from a wide range of backgrounds to communicate concerns about their own or another child's situation if they do not have an adult in whom they feel able to confide. Such modern resources are as yet relatively untapped for child protection.

### *An early warning system*

Many of the changes which have occurred in Australian society are here to stay. It would be unrealistic, for example, to expect to recreate a society where one parent is always at home in case of need, and impossible for many single parents. If children are to spend more of their time with



relative strangers in child care, at school, and in after school care arrangements while parents are at work, these are the areas which need to be reinforced.

The school system, however, has been under considerable stress from the recession and from the reduced availability of resources. The child care system can only be called disorganised. Teachers in both have been under increasing pressure for years in coping with increased class numbers. Contact between teachers and parents is usually confined to specific parent-teacher meeting times and few teachers have the time to familiarise themselves with each pupil's background, and many parents would regard it as an invasion of privacy if they did so. Work is specialised - child developmental problems may be left to a counsellor or adviser, and child protection to welfare or police agencies. In these circumstances the subtle signs of child abuse or children at risk are easily overlooked. Yet schools have more concentrated access to children, for longer, than any other organisation. In terms of relative cost, marginal improvement to the capacity of schools and of children's peer groups to act as an 'early warning system', to pick up and deal with early signs of a child at risk, could well be more cost-effective than any other option.

The limited role that traditional methods of policing and criminal intelligence can play in reducing paedophilia generally makes it unlikely, in the immediate future, that they can provide coverage for more than the tip of the paedophilic iceberg within Australia. The standard techniques of the criminal justice system are too arduous and probably too costly to do more than cover a relatively few extreme cases. Nonetheless, these cases are particularly important since they represent the 'hard-core' and most intransigent aspect of paedophilia. For the rest, however, other organisations and other parts of society must make the running.

Any preventative option which focusses on paedophilia specifically or on child abuse generally is limited by the nature of the offence - an offence which may superficially be indistinguishable from behaviour that is well regarded in Australian society, and where evidence of the offence may be

hidden under the fears, preoccupations and needs of the victim. The protection of children at risk in these circumstances must involve the protection of all children from the risk of becoming a child at risk.

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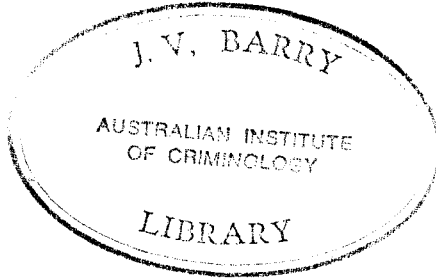


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**REFEREE'S REPORT**

**"PAEDOPHILIA: PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO CHILD PROTECTION".**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This is a lengthy article which aims to provide an overview of the extent and range of child sexual abuse and suggests some specific approaches to child protection.

However, I feel it suffers from a lack of clarity and conciseness in its early pages. Succinct definitions would have provided an immediate focus for the paper and would have allowed more space to be devoted to a thorough exploration of practical approaches to child protection, as the title suggests.

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT**

There were some significant omissions from the paper.

The most critical omission is the lack of attention given in this section to gender issues - the discussion on the 'social' context of child sexual abuse identifies three social factors, communications revolution, the working family and the mobility of Australian society, which have had an effect on child protection. The paper neglects the social context of gender and treats as incidental rather than central the fact that 97% of offenders are male. In the final analysis, perpetrators of child sexual abuse, (with the exception of a small number who are seriously psychopathological) are simply ordinary men who have the power to take what they want and then take it.

### **WHAT IS PAEDOPHILIA?**

Significant attention was given to the definition of "paedophilia". The author concludes that such a term has limits and is therefore inadequate to be particularly useful in the area of child protection. It is not clear therefore why the author persists with the term or chooses it for the title. "Child sexual assault" renders itself suitable as a phrase to cover a wide range of sexualized activity, including pornography, prostitution(See Child Sexual Assault: Draft Guidelines for Protective Intervention and Management, Community Services Victoria, Feb.1992).

### **WHEN IS A PAEDOPHILE DANGEROUS?**

Considerable space is then devoted to a discussion of whether child sexual abuse is dangerous. I believe this discussion to be unnecessary. There is a substantial body of consistent findings documenting the long term and short term effects of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse is harmful - it is also a criminal act. We do not argue about whether victims of robberies(for example) are harmed by their experience, despite the fact that for some victims such experiences may be positive in the sense that they may go through a profound reassessment of their life priorities! I disagree with the assertion (P.9) that the "turning point between acceptance and illegality is.....contact with or exposure of a child's genitalia". Apart from this definition's exclusion of a number of sexualised activities(e.g. getting the child to fondle, masturbate or perform oral sex on the perpetrator's genitals, fondling of breasts, buttocks etc., or exhibitionism) it fails to acknowledge that such behaviour is unacceptable, not simply because of the genital contact but because such abuse is an abuse of power and authority. What is not acceptable is when an adult takes advantage of a child's trust or respect (Child Protection Council, 1986). The paedophile's "warm interest" is dangerous per se - because it is his modus operandi, the method



by which he cons, tricks and bribes children. In reality it is the sort of "warm interest" that an armed robber has for a bank teller or that a dog has for its bone.

### FOCUSSING ON PREVENTION

The next part of the paper " focussing on prevention" attempts to discriminate between types of perpetrators. Four types or grades of "paedophilia" are identified. It is not clear why the author chose such a typology, when there is no literature to my knowledge which supports such a typology.

For example the distinction between a " hard core or active" abuser and a "quiescent" abuser may only be a matter of time or of being caught. Similarly, the category of "situational" abuser is dubious - there is substantial evidence to suggest that large numbers of "incest" perpetrators also abuse children outside the home (i.e. considerable overlap between this category and the "active" category). The paper concludes that the "active" paedophile is clearly the one to whom police operations are most appropriately directed. Situational abuse is considered to be largely part of the "domestic/family violence scenario which tends to be " family or group related" and therefore needs a perspective outside the rigid parameters imposed by the judicial system"(P.14). This view of "situational" abuse as "family/group related" deletes the notion of the offender's responsibility for, and choice of, his own behaviour. It ignores the perpetrator's agency, placing the abuse in the context of "family/group dynamics". The relative privacy of the home is the ideal circumstance in which child sexual assault can freely occur. It is this unhealthy privacy which systematically maintains the security of the perpetrator whilst providing an endless nightmare for his victim. Given the paper's view that child protection should be "child-centred" it is difficult to understand the author's belief that such abuse does not belong in the realm of

the criminal justice system. The legal system, in conjunction with welfare services, if effectively administered, can offer protection to the abused child and to other potential victims by breaking down the protection currently afforded to perpetrators. Professionals working in treatment programs for men, world-wide, are unequivocal that such programs are only effective in conjunction with the Criminal Justice System. Ultimately strict guidelines and procedures must be set down to ensure appropriate responses to child sexual abuse.

There is still a critical role for the law and therefore the State in so-called "situational" crimes. The perpetrator's activities are not a result of "circumstances" or "situations". He chooses to act and must be dealt with accordingly. The legal system is not perfect and significant reforms are required, but no other formal system exists which can give substantive effect to the criminal status of perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Removal of such abuse from the criminal jurisdiction is colluding in the culture of secrecy and silence of child sexual abuse.

#### **DIRECT CHILD EDUCATION**

I agree with the paper's assertion that such techniques have limited value.

#### **INDIRECT METHODS**

I disagree with the view that programs which aim to reduce excessive drinking could have a flow - on effect in the area of child sexual abuse. Experience with perpetrators leaves me with a clear view that drinking is used as an excuse after a perpetrator has been detected. In intensive therapy, most of the men who used such an excuse in their defence, acknowledged that they were not drunk at the time of most of their offences. Studies such as Kinsey(1965) use self report data from men who

have a vested interest in preserving their self image and who indulge in a multitude of distortions in order to defend themselves from taking responsibility for their sexual behaviour. Alcohol-blaming is one such (notorious) distortion.

### A NEW APPROACH

The paper notes that existing approaches to child sexual abuse are problematic in terms of cost and effectiveness. The paper briefly highlights the potential of integrated approaches to child protection, involving police, hospital and welfare services. The paper would have benefited from a greater expansion of this theme. Child-centered approaches to child protection require a multi-disciplinary, co-ordinated approach involving criminal, protective and treatment approaches - none of these approaches individually will meet the needs of the child. However, collectively they may provide the foundations for the broader social and legal response required in order to provide appropriate and preventative responses to child sexual abuse.

The paper asserts that "child protection needs to go back to basics" (P.19) and advocates exploring the scope provided by programs which "enable children to avoid the point at which sexual contact occurs and to bring into the open occasions when problems arise"(P.18). The paper acknowledges that the important factor must be to make sure that information about abuse can come out. In my view, an equally important factor is that something is then done to stop the abuse. It is recognised that disclosure is less of a problem in cases where the perpetrator is a stranger. Disclosure is however a major problem and risk when the perpetrator is a family member or is in some other socially sanctioned position of power (teacher, priest, family friend, child care worker etc). In such cases, the child's basic needs are jeopardised - the paper identifies three basic needs of children:

- 1) the need for a safe place
- 2) the need to confide in someone
- 3) the need for protection, security, an early warning system.

The paper suggests expansion of the "safe houses" program with the assistance of local government authorities and local police in the development of alternative "safe" places for children whose usual place of safety (the home) is not affording them protection. Such a proposal would require the sort of coordinated, multi-agency approach previously referred to. However it is not clear whether such safe places are simply seen as temporary sanctuaries or are seen as part of a broader strategy which aims to provide for the long-term safety of the child by removing the source of abuse. Children do need safe places, but this is only a beginning, not an end-point in the long-term protection of the child.

The paper also suggests utilization of telecommunication resources to allow children to communicate their concerns, in the absence of an adult in whom they feel able to confide. This is a worthwhile suggestion but again needs to be placed in the broader context of child protection - even if a child does disclose, the assaults may continue because the "confidante" may disbelieve them or may feel powerless to intervene or may give priority to considerations other than the child's protection. Such a strategy must be placed within a wider systematic approach which breaks the shroud of silence and affords the child the protection he/she deserves. This means identifying and removing the perpetrator from his position of power over the child. Failure to act often places the child (and other children) at risk of continuing abuse.

The paper's third proposal is to improve the capacity of schools and children's peer group to act as an early warning system for children at risk. Again, such an approach requires considerable co-ordination, involving welfare, health and legal services.

In summary, the paper suggests some starting points to encourage and empower children at risk to inform responsible others of their situation. Areas of untapped potential are identified such as local community resources (safe houses) telecommunications and schools. The paper highlights the need for the increased role of the local community in the protection of children through the provision of proxy-security and safety opportunities for children. However, such strategies are not end-points. They should be perceived as part of a broader social and legal response/giving children a voice will help to expose the real level of sexual assault, but hearing the voice and taking appropriate action will help to stop the abuse and provide the children with the protection and security to which they are entitled.

The paper would benefit considerably from further effort to place its proposals within a wider context. It would also make a substantial contribution if it explored the safety and security needs of special high risk groups of children, e.g. the intellectually or physically disabled; children in "alternative" care; children in institutions (e.g. youth training centres etc.)

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

General comment should be made about the use of language in the paper. There are many examples, as follows, where lack of attention to wording could lead to a distorted perception of the issues of child sexual abuse.

For example on P.2 the paper states that part of the "problem" lies in the nature of young children - whilst it is obvious to me that it is not intended to communicate that children are part of the problem, in any causal sense, such a sentence does imply that if children were different, then the problem would not exist. It's a bit like saying if women did not dress in certain ways etc. then they wouldn't be raped(victim blame). Perhaps to dispel any such ambivalence the sentence could be better phrased as: "Children are, by their place in society, emotionally, physically and intellectually vulnerable to abuse of adult power - they have basic affectional needs which have traditionally been fulfilled by adults whom they are taught to respect and obey and from whom they learn acceptable behaviour. If the adults charged with the responsibility for the emotional, physical and intellectual development of the child, choose to exploit the child's vulnerability, the child is unable to protect him or herself. The "problem" is the exploiting adult, not the child's vulnerability, which is a normal, intrinsic part of the development of the human species.

Similarly, P.3 line 8, child victims of paedophiles are referred to as "young partners". There is no partnership in any real sense of the word between a perpetrator and a victim.

On P.6,3rd Paragraph,P.9 line 1, and again P.12, line 9 reference is made to "paedophile" and "adult-child sexual relationships". Again whilst a broad definition of relationship can include any sort of interpersonal transaction, its most frequent use in the area of sexuality, implies a joint, consenting equal form of relatedness. There is no such form of relatedness between a perpetrator and a victim. P.6 4th paragraph refers to "heterosexual and homosexual victims". It is the perpetrators who choose the sex(same or opposite) of their victims - not the victims. Child victims can only be referred to as "same sex" or "opposite sex", never as homo/heterosexual.

On p.7 line 16, reference is made to sexual "urges" - I suggest substituting "behaviour". "Urges" implies something that is beyond the control of the perpetrator.

On p.7, the picture painted of Clarence Osborne as a "giver" of sexual satisfaction to adolescent boys minimises the purely exploitative nature of his interest. Drug dealers who target schools are "givers" of "satisfaction" to vulnerable adolescents. The criminality of Osborne's exploitative abuse of young boys who, in every way, were inferior to him should be, as for the exploitative drug dealer, unequivocal.

Again on Page 8 line 29, reference is made to the "lover" of children - perpetrators do not love children. They abuse children. Suggest that "abuser" of children would be more appropriate.

Throughout the paper, the reference to "situational" perpetrators is a euphemism which deletes the notion of the perpetrator's responsibility for his own behaviour.

Finally, a less important issue is the cursory mention of treatment programs for convicted offenders (P.13). The paragraph does not cover current advances in treatment programs, which employ broad-based cognitive-behavioural and relapse prevention techniques in a group setting. Current research highlights the cost-effectiveness of such programs in reducing the high rate of recidivism in convicted sex offenders.