

# Australasian Overseers Create Advisory Group

Aug 18  
18 August 2023

Dear Australian and New Zealand Co-workers, Elders and Friends,

Thank you to everyone for your response to our letter of 1 July 2023, regarding the prevention of child sexual abuse. We appreciate your patience as we work to address these issues in a measured and sensitive way and feel it is now important to provide you with an update.

We have communicated our zero tolerance with respect to the harming of children, young people, or anyone within our fellowship and have begun actions to support this stance. The impact of child sexual abuse is devastating and far reaching. Our thoughts are with each one of you who have been affected.

Since we last wrote to you, work has commenced to develop a standard policy and approach towards child sexual abuse prevention and survivor support. An advisory group consisting of 16 individuals from Australia and New Zealand has been formed to undertake this work. This advisory group includes members with lived experience of child sexual abuse and those who have supported survivors. It includes members with experience in child safety and protection, child safe compliance, vulnerable persons advocacy, psychology, counseling, and mental health. Several members hold professional roles including in risk avoidance and quality compliance, policy development and corporate governance. The group includes ten females, three workers, elders, and elders' wives. A broad age range is represented.

The advisory group's role, is to provide advice to the ministry, focusing on child safety and survivor support, drawing on personal and professional experience, sourcing assistance from specialist experts, external resources and professional bodies as required. Consultation and engagement will be needed from time to time, for example the voice of our parents and our young people will be critical.

The advisory group will also rely upon reputable, published material, expert bodies' formal guidelines and relevant research that is publicly accessible, to provide advice that is grounded in best practice and will operate fully within the bounds of the law. Australian national child safety standards and New Zealand child safety guidelines will form the basis

of the review of current child safety practices and guide development of improvements within our fellowship.

The identity of advisory group members will remain confidential, and they will not be providing direct engagement with the broader fellowship. Member confidentiality is important for the protection of survivors within the group, and to enable the group to focus on this important work in an impartial manner without external pressure or distraction. We will be looking at mechanisms to provide additional support to survivors in future.

All members of the advisory group completed independently recognised training on the prevention of child sexual abuse and advisory group level training. In addition, all members have obtained and provided current Working with Children Checks or Children's Worker Safety Checks and police clearances.

The scope of work to be completed is large and will take time to develop and implement. The advisory group has commenced a risk assessment to determine the areas of highest risk so these can be given immediate attention.

We appreciate each one of you who have encouraged and supported us to move forward in addressing concerns about management of child safety and survivor support. We thank each one who has approached us with concerns about individual situations. We have had to make some difficult and firm decisions to mitigate risks to children and will continue to do so.

We understand that it will take time to restore your trust and we feel inadequate in addressing these issues but commit to working openly and transparently on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. The advisory group will be valuable in guiding us however we will need the support of each one of you to progress.

We acknowledge processes may take longer than some may wish. We expect to update you in the next month and will continue to communicate with you as the work progresses and we have further matters to address.

We thank you for your efforts in supporting each other and any survivors who no longer feel able to meet with us in fellowship.

Warm regards and encouragement

Malcolm Clapham, Graeme Dalton, Wayne Dean, Trevor Joll, Alan Mitchell and Alan Richardson.

Australia: [Get support | National Office for Child Safety](#) or 24/7 support on 1800 737 732

New Zealand: <https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/listing-information-support-resources-child-abuse> or 24/7 support on 0508 326 459

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**WINGS Note:** This letter was issued 18th August by workers to elders for distribution.