

Australian support group created

Jun 30

The Brave Truth Australia

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30 June 2023

Dear Australian Workers,

It is with heavy hearts we have need to write this letter.

As you are aware, a large number of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Sexual Assault (SA) perpetrators, including numerous current and former workers, have been exposed in the past three months particularly in the USA and Canada. Over 400 perpetrators have been reported to an International Hotline set up on March 23rd, 2023, by PI Cynthia Illes, Lauren Rohs and Sheri VanDermyden Autrey. **A significant number of these have been reported from Australia.**

We can no longer see alleged or convicted perpetrators meet in Fellowship Meetings, Gospel Meetings. Special Meetings or Conventions and say nothing. We can no longer tolerate adult victim-survivors and children suffering while perpetrators are protected.

Some of these perpetrators are sitting with our relatives, and children we know. Every family deserves to know their children are safe when around Workers & Friends and sadly, currently, many are not. There is a tidal wave that has hit our shores, and action must be taken.

We thought that the 60M program in 2019 may have resulted in significant change, but unfortunately it hasn't:

- Worker codes of conduct mean nothing unless they are signed and enforced;
- Authorities have advised that some workers do not have working with children checks;
- Some perpetrators on the sex offender register continue to attend meetings;

- There has been no attempt for the fellowship to join the National Redress Scheme;
- The child safety policy/code of conduct has not been rolled out consistently across all jurisdictions;
- Some Overseers do not respond to emails/letters from victims of historical abuse in the fellowship;
- In general, perpetrators are protected whilst victims are shunned, and their distress is minimalised;

We are happy to work collaboratively with you, however, if that does not occur, we will press forward together with a good number of Friends who are supporting these much-needed changes. There is, quite simply, no place for any acceptance of this criminal behaviour.

Fortunately, we all have access to accurate information at our fingertips of up-to-date convictions and reports of alleged abusers, which allows us to act and to keep children safe. We also want to let you know that we have now set up a public Facebook page called 'The Brave Truth Australia'.

An Australian Hotline will be operational by early July 2023 and a website will also be launched. All calls to the Hotline will be completely confidential. The information provided is not committed to further action but stored for information-gathering purposes. We will take the caller's statement, vet the information with the authorities, and add the perpetrator's name to the significant confidential list we already have. Victim-survivor information will never be shared without explicit permission. We will **always** assist them in finding support, resources to help and aid them with reporting a crime, should they wish to do so.

If we are in the position of having three victim-survivors of the same alleged perpetrator, or court documents alleging CSA of one victim, we will write to the Overseer and Workers in the field to notify of the perpetrator and where they live, with current vetted details of allegations (as advised by the authorities). As mandated reporters, you may be required to immediately stop them from attending Fellowship Meetings, Gospel Meetings/Missions, Conventions & Special Meetings and any other church gatherings where children may be present. You should seek your own legal advice concerning your obligations under the relevant law in each state.

As this will be a transparent process, we will advise online (via social media and planned Website) as appropriate, together with the Overseers response (if any) and encourage

anyone who has information concerning named person, to contact the Hotline/Authorities that are working on the case.

In the very unfortunate circumstance that the alleged perpetrator may be an active Worker or Overseer, they should be removed from the Work immediately and not be in a position where they are able to give public address or voice, or able to stay in any household where a child under the age of 18 resides or visits. When a Worker is removed from the Work, whoever they stay with should be notified of the seriousness of the allegations. To avoid potential legal liability, we would recommend to you that all alleged perpetrators (Workers, Elders & Friends) should not attend Fellowship Meetings, Gospel Meetings/Missions, Conventions & Special Meetings, or any other church gatherings, social or otherwise, where children may be present, until the allegations are deemed cleared or unfounded by the Police. ***A very strong stance of zero-tolerance needs to be taken towards Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Abuse.***

Please feel free to contact us by return email. We would be pleased to communicate directly with any or all of you towards a common goal and our only motive, a child safe environment.

Sincerely,

[signatures removed]

Vianne Hills

Jillian Hishon

Ross Bowden

For and on behalf of many Friends, Parents & Grandparents.