

## Purpose

To build strong and safe cultures in Australian sporting organisations that increase the confidence and awareness of those who participate in and deliver sport.

## Background

- In 2014 the ASC engaged the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) to help it deliver a National Safeguarding Children in Sport Strategy (NSCSS). This involved a comprehensive stakeholder consultation with State Departments of Sport & Recreation (SDSRs), National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and Member Protection Information Officers (MPIOs) and a needs analysis to review and report on the 'current state' of child safeguarding in Australian sport.
- The ACF presented the findings of this review along with a set of actions to help NSOs achieve greater levels of child protection within their sports.
- In 2015 the ASC and ACF collaborated with SDSRs, Play by the Rules and several NSOs to deliver these actions, which were aimed at improving existing child protection policies and increasing the confidence and awareness of everyone in Australian sport. The NSCSS also sought to ascertain the types of education programs and practical tools that sports require, particularly at the club level, to help create safe and sustainable sporting environments for children.
- To further inform the NSCSS, the ACF conducted assessments of 43 NSOs in 2016 to gain information about their current child protection policies, procedures and practices, strengths and weaknesses.
- This gave the Australian sport sector its first ever baseline data on child safety policies and practices the evidence of which will enable a longitudinal evaluation of child safe sport as the NSCSS progresses.
- This extensive body of work led to the release in 2017 of the Child Safe Sport Toolkit and Process resources for sporting organisations.
- This work was set against the backdrop of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse.

## Key Issues and Risks

- Research conducted by the ACF, and subsequent findings of the Royal Commission, have identified contributing factors within organisations that lead to children and young people not being adequately protected from abuse and exploitation. This research has identified four key organisational vulnerabilities as described below:
  - Lack of awareness
  - Lack of knowledge
  - Lack of confidence
  - Lack of processes and support
- Additionally, one of the key themes coming out of the Royal Commission was the need for national consistency in the approach to child protection. Working with Children Checks are just one example where jurisdictional legislative inconsistency increases the risks to children in sport.
- That is why NSOs need to focus on building stronger cultures in their sport rather than rely on compliance measures.

## Next Steps

### ASC and sector partners:

- Conduct more NSO education around child safe sport
- Develop #SafeSportAustralia (SSA), a 'movement' to create safe sporting environments for all young Australians.
- Digitally driven, SSA aims to educate sporting communities across Australia about the risks to young people in sport, and empower them to take action to be part of the solution.
- The ultimate goal of SSA is to equip people with the confidence and tools to start a conversation about child safeguarding within their own sporting club, and to be able to recognise risks and take action to prevent harm.

### NSO CEOs and Boards:

*What can you do to build a stronger child safe culture in your sport and help us achieve sector wide impact?*

1. Have a conversation with your Board about improving child safety in your sport (ASC is happy to assist or present)
2. Prioritise children's safety and commence the journey to becoming a safer sport
3. Familiarise yourself with the ASC's Child Safe Sport Toolkit & Process
4. Sign Up to *Play by the Rules*
5. Develop your child safe sport plan
6. Evaluate/Monitor your child safe sport plan

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## FAST FACTS

### From the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

- A total of 6,875 survivors shared their experiences in private sessions from May 2013 to May 2017.
- 408 survivors (75% male) identified the abuse occurred in sport and recreation institutions.
- The Royal Commission identified 344 sport and recreation institutions where abuse occurred.
- Children aged between 10 - 14 years when abuse first occurred.
- More than half revealed the abuse occurred for up to 12 months and over one-third revealed the abuse lasted for between one to five years.
- Institutions tolerated and even encouraged bullying and abuse (physical, psychological and emotional).
- A range of adults sexually abused children in these contexts; there was no typical adult perpetrator profile in a sport or recreation setting. As in other institutional settings, these people have diverse motivations and behaviours and are influenced by various factors which can change over time.
- Locations where abuse mostly occurred included:
  - camps, overnight competitions and excursions
  - overnight stays
  - billeting and hosting arrangements
  - travel arrangements
  - change rooms and concealed or obscured environments
  - public environments
- Institutions mainly failed because of:
  - institutional cultures that created risks for children
  - institutional policies and governance arrangements that were inadequate
  - poor risk management
  - failures in complaint handling and poor responses to child sexual abuse
- Other contributing factors:
  - poor governance and leadership
  - unaccountable leaders
  - pursuit of excellence at any cost
  - cultures of physical abuse and bullying
  - protection of reputation as a primary concern
  - inadequate guidelines on child safety
  - child safety policies not being followed or understood
  - inadequate education, training and communication of policies