

**Breaking the Silence** applies to all persons holding a position of authority within the Presbyterian Church of Australia in those States or Territories where **Breaking the Silence** Edition 3 has been formally adopted by the appropriate State General Assembly, whether paid or unpaid, who are involved in a **child-related** activity, whether permanently or temporarily, and all ministers, deaconesses, licentiates and home missionaries.



**NOTE:** Breaking the Silence deals specifically with the issue of **abuse of children and young people** and the **abuse of authority** by those in a **position of authority within the church**. It does not apply to any other forms of abuse, grievance or personal injury claim. Words in **bold** have a specific meaning as defined in **Breaking the Silence**.



**This document is a summary only. As a guideline it should not be solely relied upon for advice. Those responsible for protecting children and young people, and those in a position of authority within the church, should consult Breaking the Silence Edition 3 and obtain professional advice in each situation and every individual case. Remember, you are not on your own in these matters.**

A COMPANION DOCUMENT TO BREAKING THE SILENCE EDITION 3  
 BREAKING THE SILENCE: OUR POLICY BROCHURE, EDITION 3 ISSUE 1, SEPT 2008  
 © CHILD PROTECTION UNIT  
 PRESBYTERIAN SOCIAL SERVICES  
 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE ABOUT ANYTHING WITHIN THIS BROCHURE PLEASE CONTACT:**

Elizabeth McClean – Director, Child Protection Unit  
 Presbyterian Social Services  
 PO Box 2196 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
 (W) 02 9690 9324 (M) 0427 421 467  
 E: emcclean@pcnsw.org.au



**INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE**

**national**

- » Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800
- » Lifeline 13 11 14

**australian capital territory**

- » Office for Children, Youth and Family Support 02 6207 1466 - southern  
02 62071069 - northern  
02 6207 0720 - after hours
- » Australian Federal Police Sexual Assault Unit 02 6256 7777

**new south wales**

- » Youthline 1800 551 800
- » DoCS Help Line 13 21 11
- » Child Abuse Prevention Services 02 9716 8000 or 02 9716 8000 (24 hr)

**northern territory**

- » Family & Children's Services 1800 700 250

**queensland**

- » Dept of Families 07 3224 8045 or 1800 811 810 (after hrs)
- » Crisis Care 07 3235 9999 or 1800 177 135

**south australia**

- » Child Abuse Report Line 13 14 78

**tasmania**

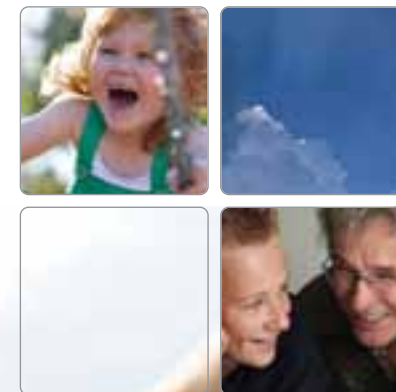
- » Dept of Health Services 1300 737 639 or 03 6230 7833

**victoria**

- » Dept of Human Services 03 9616 7777
- » Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78 (24 hr)

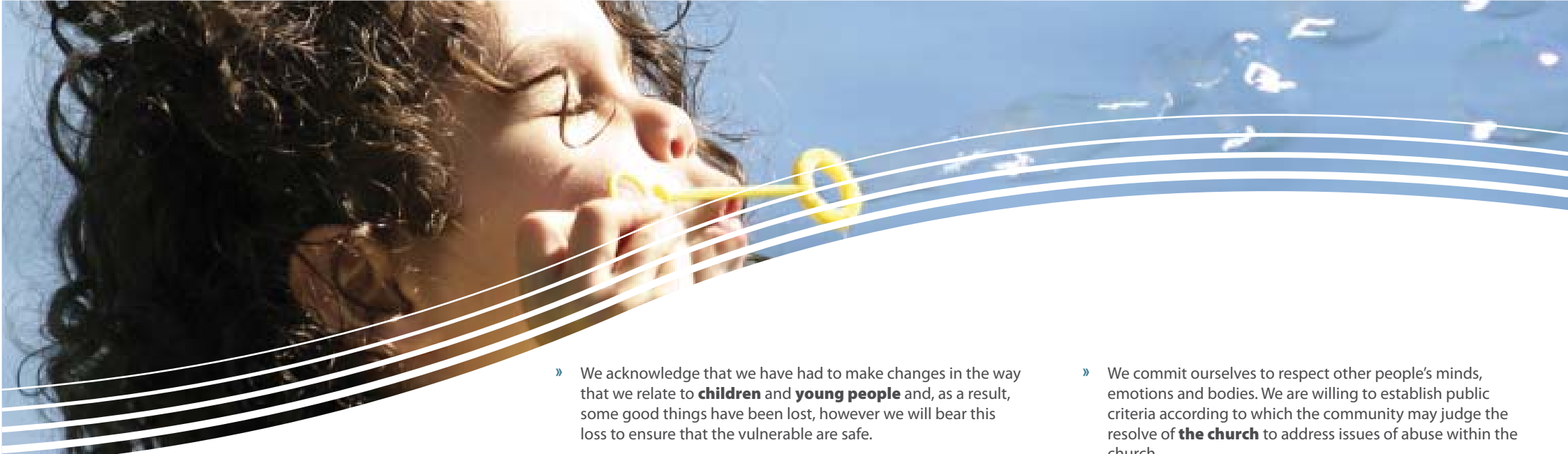
**western australia**

- » Family & Children's Services 08 9222 2555 or 1800 622 258
- » Department of Child Protection 08 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008 (24 hr)



**BREAKING THE SILENCE  
 OUR POLICY**





- » We acknowledge and accept the extraordinary amount of trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to ensuring that all our actions are morally upright.
- » We require those who work on behalf of **the church** to indicate their agreement with this policy and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse. We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for **children, young people** and others, that they be, and feel, safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by **the church**, or accessing services provided by **the church**. We believe that **the church** should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.
- » We acknowledge that, as a church, our responses to **victims** in the past have varied greatly. We express regret and sorrow for the hurt caused whenever the response appeared to deny or minimise the pain that **victims** have experienced.
- » We will ensure that all people in **positions of authority within the church** and/or working with **children** and **young people** are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries.
- » We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, best practice recruitment and selection processes, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.

- » We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to **children** and **young people** and, as a result, some good things have been lost, however we will bear this loss to ensure that the vulnerable are safe.
- » We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgement or prejudicing the rights of the **alleged offender**. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to **victims** and a disservice to **offenders**.
- » We are willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within **the church**. We will ensure that we are aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.
- » We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in the allegation, investigation, determination, outcome and follow-up stages, including the **aggrieved person** and the **alleged offender**, and we actively seek to provide this support.
- » We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by legislation. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our duty of care, and therefore all people in a **position of authority within the church**, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a duty of care towards those over whom they have authority. In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age. We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a marriage relationship and that in this context it is a good gift of God.

- » We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions and bodies. We are willing to establish public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of **the church** to address issues of abuse within the church.
- » Our policies and processes are contained within **Breaking the Silence**. All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, overseen by the **CPU**, investigated thoroughly and determined as described in **Breaking the Silence** Edition 3.
- » Irrespective of any other action that may be taken, the church reserves the right to exercise its powers of discipline over adherents, members and office-bearers according to its **Code of Discipline**, the **Voluntary Code of Conduct** and **Breaking the Silence** wherever this action is deemed necessary.

