

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**EMBARGO TO 5am, 1 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**NAPCAN ANNOUNCES ALARMING RESULTS FROM NATIONAL SURVEY**

Less than half of Australians say they would take action to protect a child when confronted with clear signs of abuse or neglect, according a National Survey by the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN).

The findings suggest that even if a child disclosed sexual abuse, only 34% of Australians would call the police.

The shock results released today are taken from NAPCAN's 2009 National Survey, which surveyed 22,000 Australians, gauging their attitudes to child abuse and neglect. The results are released prior to National Child Protection Week 2010, which begins on Fathers' Day this Sunday.

The survey found that although most people (92% of respondents) consider child abuse to be a serious issue, many are hesitant to take action if faced with a situation of child abuse or neglect.

When confronted with clear-cut scenarios of child abuse, less than 50% of survey respondents said they would take action to protect the child by ringing a child protection authority or the police.

NAPCAN Chief Executive Officer Rosanna Martinello said the findings were alarming and highlighted the need to educate the whole community that protecting our children is everyone's responsibility.

"First and foremost, we have to recognise that every Australian child is the responsibility of all of us," she said.

Dr Adam Tomison, a NAPCAN Board member and an authority on child protection, said, "This is particularly concerning, given the survey respondents were almost unanimous that child abuse is a serious issue and they had a good understanding of child abuse and neglect issues. Despite having an understanding of the issues, many wouldn't take formal action. All of us are responsible for protecting our kids yet this message still doesn't seem to be getting through".

Respondents gave a range of reasons for not taking action, from worrying they might be wrong (48%) to not wanting to admit things like that happen (22%). Many people (38%) wouldn't take action because they 'don't know what to do'. But according to Ms Martinello, the most troubling reason given was many people just don't think it is their business (42%).

"When we know 33,000 children are abused or neglected each year, it has to be everyone's business," she said. "On the positive side, most respondents thought everyone was responsible to varying degrees".

Almost everyone surveyed nominated parents (98%) as *mainly* responsible for children's wellbeing and safety. Others thought to be mainly responsible include relatives (54%), schools (51%) and child protection authorities (48%).

When it came to who was *not at all* responsible, a surprising number of respondents nominated business (31%) and the media (17%). Most startlingly, 11% said that neighbours have no responsibility at all for children's safety.

"We were stunned to find that more than 2,000 of the respondents didn't believe neighbours played any part in helping to protect children and prevent child abuse," said Dr Tomison.

“Clearly more needs to be done to ensure that people accept we can all play a role in creating a safe environment for our kids.”

For this year’s National Child Protection Week, NAPCAN is focusing on protecting children being everyone’s business, and addressing the ‘don’t know what to do’ response by creating a list of tips for the public that give clear guidance on how to help prevent child abuse in the first place.

“We all have a role to play, whether we are a parent, a relative, a neighbour, a policy-maker, a journalist or an employer,” said Ms Martinello.

“The NAPCAN website arms different groups in our society with the knowledge and confidence to prevent child abuse and neglect before a tragic situation occurs. The tips are not definitive or exhaustive, but they are a good start.”

The ‘*what can I do to help prevent child abuse and neglect?*’ tips can be found on the NAPCAN website [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au).

**When we know 33,000 children are abused each year, it’s everyone’s business.**

To read the NAPCAN National Survey results, visit: [www.preventingchildabuse.com.au](http://www.preventingchildabuse.com.au)

**Media interviews and materials are available. Please contact:**

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**About NAPCAN:**

NAPCAN is a leading advocate for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. NAPCAN’s mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect before it starts and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Australia’s children. NAPCAN does this by influencing public policy, building community awareness and driving behaviour change (NAPCAN Prevention First).

NAPCAN works with researchers, professionals, government, business, the media and committed individuals to bring about this change. NAPCAN also works directly with children and young people, conducting innovative programs to strengthen protective behaviours and build resilience and life skills. NAPCAN also works in local communities building inclusive networks and strengthening local support for children and families. For further information, go to: [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)

**About the 2009 National Survey**

For National Child Protection Week 2009, NAPCAN wished to gauge community attitudes to child abuse and neglect. NAPCAN developed an attitudinal survey, which attracted more than 22,000 respondents, making it Australia’s largest survey of its kind.

NAPCAN pooled the expertise of a group of social scientists to develop a survey questionnaire. After a literature review and focus group pre-testing, the survey was launched in the lead-up to National Child Protection Week 2009. NAPCAN created a website ([www.preventingchildabuse.org.au](http://www.preventingchildabuse.org.au)), making the survey available online through to early November 2009. People without access to the internet were able to ring an 1800 number and do the survey with a NAPCAN staff member.