

The findings from the review are helpful for all denominations and we note that the Independent Inquiry (IICSA) will now turn its attention to smaller denominations, including BUGB. BUGB's proactive work on the historic case review and standardising national safeguarding training and policy means that as a denomination, we can provide assurance that we take safeguarding seriously.

I attach a highlighted report for your reference, which draws out some key learning points that are likely to be of particular interest to you. In particular, I draw your attention to:

1) The report's interim recommendations on pages 65-66 - which call for a preventative approach, an open and transparent culture and making it as easy as possible for individuals to raise concerns or report abuse. We talk a lot about building a 'culture of vigilance' in our SCBA churches - which means that everyone has a responsibility to safeguard the people who attend our churches and it's important that everyone knows who to talk to if they are uncertain or concerned (i.e. your DPSs or Safeguarding Trustee). We have been encouraging SCBA churches to advertise their DPS roles visibly in churches so that they are easy to find and approachable, we have good practice in this area in a number of our churches.

2) You will note the survivors' descriptions of how hard it is for them to come forward to report abuse/harm, and particularly how difficult it is to do this when the person causing the harm has a position of power in the church or is perceived to have spiritual or moral authority e.g. is a church employee or a minister. There are many examples of churches 'blaming' the victim for coming forward.

This is important. Sometimes we encounter perceptions that there are many malicious or unfounded allegations against church leaders. This perception is not supported by our local experience in SCBA, nor is it supported by national learning. Being open to believing that it is possible for this harm or abuse to happen in churches helps us be sensitive and effective to responding to concerns or disclosures if they emerge. This is really important.

3) Lastly, this report sets out the impact of experiencing abuse. We have a number of survivors of abuse within our churches, for some of whom church has not been a safe place.

Understanding the experience and the impact of this abuse on these survivors is a helpful insight into our approach and response in pastoral care.

If there are any additional questions or comments about this report or other matters, please do get in touch.

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