

Barnardos Australia Statement

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Barnardos Australia Statement – Response to ABC Four Corners Childcare Investigation

The revelations from the ABC Four Corners investigation into Australia’s childcare system are deeply distressing and reinforce that there is still significant work to be done to safeguard children in early education settings across the country. We congratulate Four Corners on elevating the voices of families that have had their trust broken.

As one of Australia’s longest-standing child-focussed organisations, Barnardos Australia is here to ensure that every child can feel safe, be safe, and be heard.

This investigation highlights the need for greater education, awareness, and evidence-based strategies to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation material. This horrific abuse has devastating, lifelong impacts on survivors and their families.

Protecting children requires a whole-of-community approach. Families, educators, governments, early learning providers, and child-focused organisations must work together to elevate the voices and rights of children, and ensure best-practice prevention and response strategies are embedded across the sector.

Our Early Learning Centres and all Barnardos programs operate within a robust child-safe framework aligned with the National Quality Standards (NQS) regulated by Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Audit (ACECQA).

Our ELCs operate under a not-for-profit, best-practice model, designed to reinvest in quality, staff capability, and learning environments where children feel safe, respected, and supported to learn and grow. Our approach is grounded in secure relationships, emotional wellbeing, strong family partnerships, and a child-centred practice that honours curiosity, belonging, connection, and play.

Our commitment includes:

- Evidence-driven, child-focused safeguarding practices across every service
- Rigorous Child Safe employee recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development
- Active supervision and transparent reporting systems
- Empowering children as active participants in their learning and safety
- Partnering with parents and carers to build safe, nurturing online and physical environments
- A culture where safeguarding concerns are raised and acted upon immediately

We welcome scrutiny that strengthens child safeguarding, identifies blind spots in service delivery and reinforces public confidence in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. Families must be able to trust that every child will be protected, nurtured, and valued.

Barnardos Australia will continue to work alongside families, sector partners, regulators, and government to create safer and more nurturing learning environments for all children. Children are at the centre of everything we do, and we will never compromise on their safety or our commitment to their wellbeing.