

National Child Protection Week

Building a child-friendly Australia

In the lead-up to National Child Protection Week, 3–9 September 2006, NAPCAN Foundation is calling on parents, carers, professional organisations and the wider Australian community to really get involved this year, and help prevent child abuse before it starts, by creating child-friendly communities.

This key event in the national calendar encourages all Australians to participate in a range of activities in order to promote the wellbeing and safety of all children. By raising public awareness about the problem of child abuse and neglect, the week inspires all members of the community to take action to prevent it, by helping to make their local community child-friendly.

A child-friendly community is one where children are valued, supported and respected. It may be a local street, a sporting club, a domestic environment or a public park. By giving children opportunities to reach their potential and be actively involved in decisions that affect their lives, a child-friendly community significantly reduces risk factors leading to child abuse and neglect, and so promotes child wellbeing and resilience.

Child abuse and neglect is a widespread problem in Australia, with 40,416 substantiations of abuse and/or neglect in 2004–2005; that is, one child substantiated every 11 minutes (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006). Yet, a national study by the Australian Childhood Foundation, *Out of sight—out of mind*, has found that Australians are more concerned with rising petrol prices and public transport than the issue of child abuse and neglect (Tucci, Mitchell, & Goddard, 2006). For this reason, NAPCAN encourages Australians to take part in National Child Protection Week and collectively work together everyday to create a safer environment for children.

In 2005, approximately 250,000 Australians directly participated in at least one of the registered 2,500 community activities—a two-fold increase on 2004. Activities during the week included community breakfasts, information forums, fundraising events, community-building workshops and simple family fun days.

This year, NAPCAN is shifting focus to the children themselves by encouraging adults to give them the chance to freely express themselves, and play a part in making their local communities child-friendly. We believe that children really do have a good understanding and knowledge of what is meant by ‘child-friendly’ and that child-friendly communities can best be created by listening to, and acting upon, children’s ideas.

As momentum grows towards National Child Protection Week, we have launched the Capture a Child-Friendly Moment Campaign. By encouraging people to send us photographs and stories of child-friendly moments, we are sharing them with the wider community on our website, and together are building a picture of how a child-friendly Australia can look. Capturing and sharing child-friendly moments also highlights how simple child-friendly communities are to create.

www.napcan.org.au/CaptureaChildFriendlyMoment.htm

With your help, NAPCAN Foundation will continue to inspire all Australians to get involved in National Child Protection Week and take up the ‘child-friendly challenge’ by putting kids first and building a child-friendly Australia.

To register an event for National Child Protection Week or to find out more information, visit www.napcan.org.au or call (02) 9211 0224.

References

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2006). *Child Protection Australia 2004-05*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- Tucci, J., Mitchell, J., & Goddard, C. (2006). *Out of sight—out of mind: Community attitudes about child abuse and child protection in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Childhood Foundation & National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Monash University. Retrieved 27 June 2006 from <http://www.childhood.org.au/downloads/2006%20Out%20of%20sight%20out%20of%20mind.pdf>.