

Tasmanian Task Force on Sexual Abuse

1989 – 1989

Details

The Tasmanian Task Force on Sexual Abuse was set up in March 1989 to report into the adequacy of the services available to children who were victims of sexual abuse. It also considered the management of the perpetrators of that abuse. The Task Force reported in November 1989.

The Task Force made 41 recommendations. Some of them were:

- That steps be taken to prevent children who had been sexually abused from 'systems abuse', that is, being further abused by the system. This included avoiding repeated interviews, physical examinations, and court appearances. The perpetrator of the abuse, not the child, should be removed from the home.
- The Task Force stated that no child brought into care for protection should go to a corrective institution because of 'disturbed behaviour' as had happened in the past. Instead the Task Force recommended that the Department of Community Services establish a range of short, medium, and long term placements that included specialised foster care, special contract care, and facilities for children who could not cope with a nuclear family approach. All the people working in these placements would require special training. The non-government sector should also be funded to provide therapeutic care and support.
- That there should be prevention programs and support services for children.
- That a Child Protection Board be established to replace the Child Protection Assessment Board. In addition to assessing individual cases as the Child Protection Assessment Board had done, the Child Protection Board would develop policy, coordinate policy across government departments and agencies, and develop community education programs.
- That government departments and non-government agencies should conduct training programs for staff.
- That the Department of Community Services should work with families to prevent the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children.
- That the *Child Protection Act (1974)* should be amended so that a court could force the perpetrator, rather than the child, to leave the home. The Task Force also recommended that the courts be empowered to place restraining orders on the perpetrator.
- That services for children be child centred. In the past, a focus on the family or the perpetrator allowed compromises that put the child in danger. Sexual abuse must be recognised as a criminal offence and dealt with by an approach that incorporated the criminal justice system and therapy.

Special contract care, recommended by the Task Force, placed children who were disturbed or had offended with families who were specifically trained and supported to look after them. Contract Care was an alternative to placing children in institutions such as Ashley Home for Boys. It could also be an interim step between coming out of Ashley and moving into private accommodation.

In special contract care children were placed in care for a specific length of time but that could be extended. An important aspect of the program was that children were placed in or near to their own family and community so that they could return when they finished.

Under the Special Contract Care Program, case workers worked out goals with the children and provided support so that they could attain them. One case worker supervised the child while another ran the program. This ensured that the case worker also received support. When children finished the Program, their caseworker remained with them.

More info

Related Entries

Related Legislation

- [Child Protection Act 1974, Tasmania \(1974 - 1998\)](#)

The Tasmanian Task Force on Sexual Abuse recommended amending the *Child Protection Act 1974* so that restraining orders could be placed on perpetrators and so that they could be forced to leave the child's home.

Related Organisations

- [Child Protection Assessment Board \(1975 - 1991\)](#)

The Tasmanian Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse recommended abolishing the Child Protection Assessment Board.

- [Child Protection Board \(1991 - 1998\)](#)

The Tasmanian Task Force on Sexual Abuse recommended establishing the Child Protection Board.

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