Institute of Child Protection Studies

Australian Catholic University

OUR SAFETY COUNTS:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THEIR SAFETY CONCERNS

A Report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Tim Moore

Morag McArthur

Jessica Heerde

Steven Roche

Patrick O'Leary

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Institute of Child Protection Studies

ACU Australian Catholic University

QUT Queensland University of Technology

Griffith University

Project team

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Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

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Preface

On Friday 11 January 2013, the Governor-General appointed a six-member Royal Commission to inquire into how institutions with a responsibility for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse.

The Royal Commission is tasked with investigating where systems have failed to protect children, and making recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

The Royal Commission has developed a comprehensive research program to support its work and to inform its findings and recommendations. The program focuses on eight themes:

- Why does child sexual abuse occur in institutions?
- How can child sexual abuse in institutions be prevented?
- How can child sexual abuse be better identified?
- How should institutions respond where child sexual abuse has occurred?
- How should government and statutory authorities respond?
- What are the treatment and support needs of victims/survivors and their families?
- What is the history of particular institutions of interest?
- How do we ensure the Royal Commission has a positive impact?

This research report falls within theme one.

The research program means the Royal Commission can:

- obtain relevant background information
- fill key evidence gaps
- explore what is known and what works
- develop recommendations that are informed by evidence, can be implemented and respond to contemporary issues.

For more on this program, please visit the Royal Commission's research page at:

www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/research.

Executive Summary

Over the past three years, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has explored the extent to which children and young people have been exposed to child sexual abuse, and considered some of the reasons why institutions have failed to actively prevent child sexual abuse and appropriately respond when children and young people have been harmed. Similar inquiries have consistently found that institutions have failed to appreciate children and young people's views and experiences. They have also found that institutions have given children and young people few opportunities to inform the ways to identify or respond to child sexual abuse or other problems that allow risks of abuse to persist.

This study attempts to better understand children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions, and their views on how adults and institutions are responding to their safety needs. It is not a prevalence study and does not attempt to quantify the extent to which children and young people have encountered abuse. Instead, it asks them to consider how they, adults and institutions currently demonstrate that they are safe; and the ways they believe adults and institutions act and would act to keep them safe if they were in a situation where their safety was compromised.

The value of gauging children and young people's sense of safety and their views on how they believe adults and institutions might act has been highlighted within the broader literature. For example, previous studies have shown that when children and young people have little confidence in adults and institutions adequately responding to their safety concerns, they are less likely to raise their concerns or seek help. Similarly, studies have suggested that when children and young people perceive adults as not caring, not having the knowledge to respond to issues, or not being accessible to children, disclosure is unlikely. As such, understanding how children perceive safety and institutions' responsiveness is vital to develop appropriate strategies to support children and young people and to protect them from harm.

The study

In 2013, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University, with colleagues at the Queensland University of Technology and Griffith University, to develop an understanding of how children perceive safety and consider it within institutional contexts. Specifically, the Children's Safety Study explored:

a. how children and young people conceptualise and perceive safety
b. children and young people's views on what gives rise to these perceptions
c. children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions
d. what children and young people consider is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions
e. what children and young people consider should be done to respond to safety issues in institutions.

This study was conducted in three stages: planning; conceptualising safety; and considering children's experiences of safety, and institutional responses.

The study was conducted with the approval of the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee and various state and territory education departments.

This report provides an overview of the major findings emerging from Stage Three of the project, which was the implementation of an online survey completed by 1,480 Australian children and young people. The development of the Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) Survey was informed by the findings of Stage Two of the project (focus groups), and by two children and young people's reference groups. The survey attempted to gauge the extent to which institutions met the safety needs identified by children and young people themselves.

The survey

The ASK-YP Survey was developed to both test the findings from Stage Two of the Children's Safety Study, which involved 10 focus groups, and to further explore children and young people's perceptions of safety. This included testing their perceptions of the ways that adults and institutions demonstrated they were meeting children's safety needs, and responding when children and young people were unsafe.

Two groups of children and young people provided ongoing feedback on the development of the ASK-YP Survey, and another group trialled it before administration. The survey included measures that asked participants to assess the extent to which an institution that they had recently encountered demonstrated child safe characteristics (as determined by focus groups); what they would do if they were to encounter an unsafe adult or peer; what they would need if they were in a similar situation; what they believe is currently in place to prevent and respond to safety concerns; from whom would they seek support; and what keeps them from seeking and receiving support.

The survey was administered online to children and young people aged 10–18. Participants were recruited directly through schools, youth organisations and online through electronic marketing. The survey was completed by 1,480 children and young people, with a mean age of 14.8 years.

Findings

How safe are institutions for children and young people?

Most children and young people reported that they felt safe at school, in sporting teams, at holiday camps and at church.

They often believed that in these institutions, adults care about children and young people, value their views and opinions, and pay attention when children and young people raise concerns. However, about 10 per cent of young people aged over 14 were sceptical about whether adults know children well enough, or talk to children about the things that they are worried about.

Of the characteristics of a child safe organisation identified by children and young people, adults paying attention when a child or young person raised a concern or worry was the most influential characteristic in determining how safe children felt within an institution.

What do children and young people believe they need when they encounter an unsafe adult or peer?

Children and young people believed that if they were to encounter an unsafe adult or peer they would need another adult to believe them when they raised their concern and to step in and take control. They also believed that children and young people would need to know what to do or say to protect themselves.

Participants believed it was particularly important for an adult to believe a female child or young person when they disclosed encountering an unsafe adult, and for male students to know what to do if they encountered an unsafe male peer. They also believed it was important for adults to notice when a teacher was acting inappropriately with a male student, and for female students to know whether what the male teacher was doing was appropriate.

How likely was it that children and young people might encounter an unsafe adult or peer and what would they do if they did?

Two-thirds of participants felt it was unlikely that a child or young person at their school would encounter a scenario in which an adult or peer made them feel uncomfortable.

Almost all participants felt they would be worried if they themselves came across a situation like any of those presented, although 10 per cent reported that they wouldn't tell anyone if they encountered an adult who made them uncomfortable; 20 per cent reported they wouldn't tell anyone if they encountered an unsafe peer. Participants' unwillingness to tell someone about their concerns increased with age, with more than one-quarter of those aged over 16 reporting that it was unlikely they would talk to someone if they encountered an unsafe adult or peer.

How well do they believe schools prevent or would respond to children's safety concerns?

Although most children and young people believed that their institution was equipped to respond to their safety concerns and had a role in doing so, almost 50 per cent felt that adults at their school would only know that a child was unsafe if the child told them. Young women also reported that they were often unprepared for dealing with unsafe situations, and had not learnt what they should do in class.

Who would children and young people seek assistance from?

Two-thirds of participants said they would turn to a peer if they encountered an unsafe situation, while 55 per cent said they would turn to their mother and 35 per cent to their father. Participants were unlikely to seek support from an adult at school, with only one-quarter identifying a teacher as someone they would turn to. Female participants reported being less likely than male participants to seek support from an adult. However, males were more likely than females to report that they would not seek assistance.

What keeps children and young people from seeking assistance?

The most significant barrier to seeking support at school was feeling uncomfortable talking to adults about sensitive issues. Children and young people were also concerned that things would get worse if they told an adult about their situation; one in 10 believed that adults at their school would not know what to do if help was sought.

How adequate are schools in preventing unsafe situations?

More than half of participants believed their school was doing enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe, while one-third thought they could be doing more. Only 5 per cent of the whole sample believed their school was doing nothing. However, one-quarter of participants aged 14 and older believed that schools were not doing anything to prevent unsafe situations.

Implications

Although only small numbers of participants reported that they never felt safe, that institutions were not demonstrating they were child safe, and that they had little confidence in schools' efforts to keep them safe, attention to the needs and experiences of this group is warranted. In particular, young women's need for more information on what to do in unsafe situations, and older participants' need for adults to know students well enough to identify when they may be unsafe, need to be addressed.

The finding that young people are more likely to turn to friends and parents for help than to those within their institutions needs to be further explored. More assistance for friends and parents in supporting children as well as improving young people's confidence in adults within institutional settings may be priorities. In particular, institutions working with children and young people need to be mindful of the fact that many children and young people perceive barriers to seeking and receiving support. Children and young people's discomfort with talking to adults about safety issues, and their view that things would get worse if they told, are still prevalent, meaning strategies need to be introduced to ensure that barriers are minimised within institutional contexts.

Limitations

Although it was not anticipated that the ASK-YP Survey sample would be representative, the low participation rate, large variation in participating students from each school, and the presence of some clustered data (one-quarter of participants were from a single school) suggest that findings need to be interpreted with caution. The ASK-YP Survey did not attempt to gauge the prevalence of child sexual abuse within institutions. Instead, it explored children and young people's perceptions of the likelihood of individuals encountering an unsafe adult or peer and their assessment of how they believed they, adults and institutions might respond. Future research might be conducted to validate the ASK-YP Survey measures, and to further investigate the prevalence of child sexual abuse, and the responses of individual adults and institutions that children and young people interact with.

1. Introduction

In 2013, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) commissioned the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University, in partnership with colleagues from Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology, to carry out a research project to explore children and young people's views about safety, including from sexual abuse.

The Children's Safety Study investigated children and young people's experiences and understanding of safety in institutional contexts. Specifically, the research project explored:

a. how children and young people conceptualise and perceive safety
b. children and young people's views on what gives rise to these perceptions
c. children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions
d. what children and young people consider is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions
e. what children and young people consider should be done to respond to safety issues in institutions.

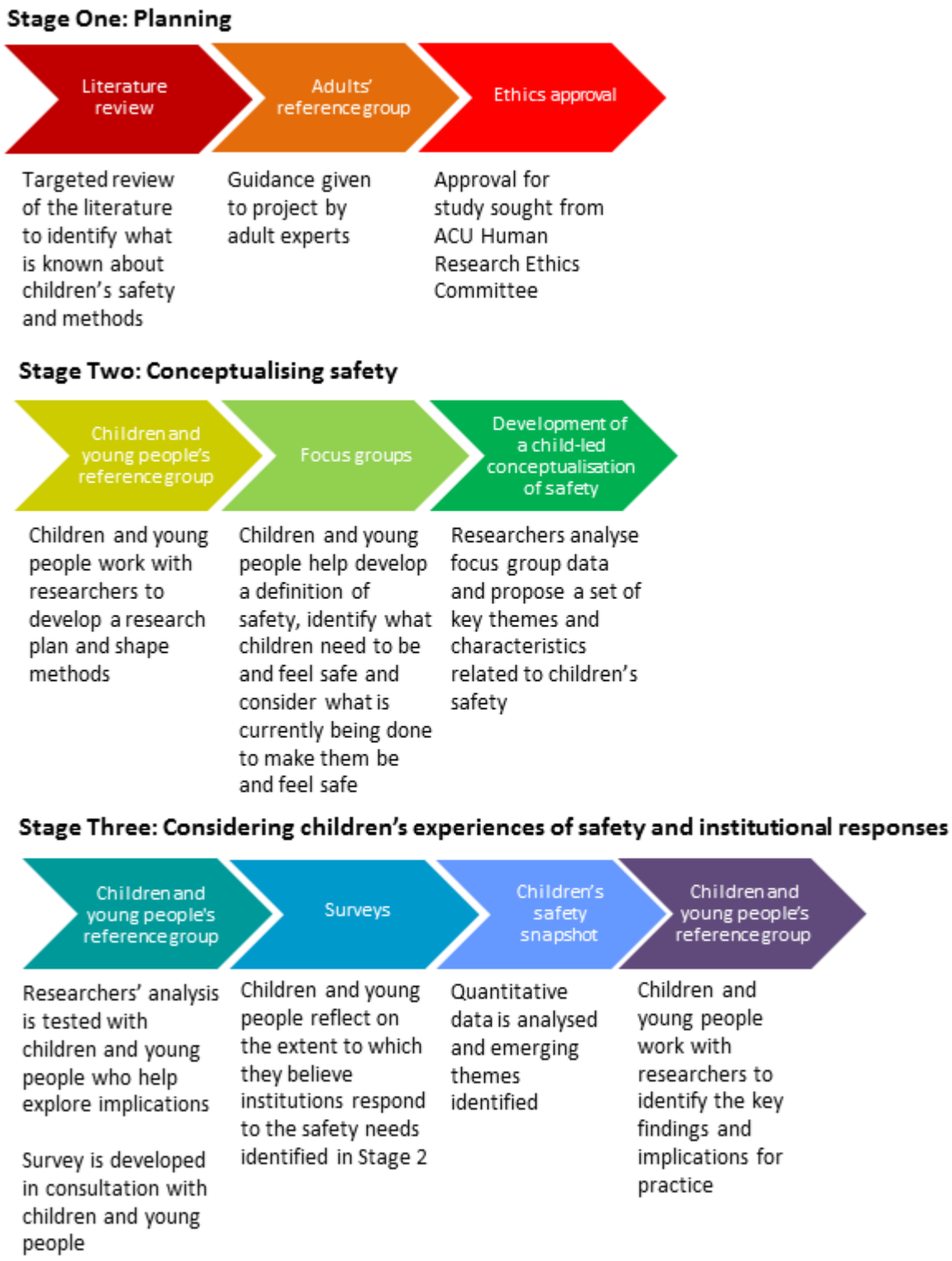
The study was conducted in three stages: planning; conceptualising safety; and considering children's experiences of safety, and institutional responses. The key tasks in each stage are summarised in Figure 1.

To summarise, *Stage One* (planning) included meetings with our Children and Young People's Reference Group, a targeted review of the literature, and advice from the Royal Commission and an Adults' Advisory Group. This stage was completed in April 2014. *Stage Two* (conceptualising safety) included 10 focus groups, which were conducted between May and November 2014. These focus groups attempted to answer each of the abovementioned research questions and to develop a set of characteristics of a child and youth safe institution and institutional responses to safety concerns.

The data collection for *Stage Three* (considering children's experiences of safety, and institutional responses) was conducted between August and November 2015. This stage used the ASK-YP Survey (developed specifically for this project) and sought to use quantitative data to complement and build upon the qualitative findings arising from Stage Two, particularly in relation to questions c, d and e.

This report summarises the findings of Stage Three and concludes with implications relating to the way that institutions understand and respond to children and young people's safety needs.

Figure 1: Stages of the Children's Safety Study



2. Background

2.1 The value of gauging children's perceptions

There is a growing body of research that stresses the value of eliciting children's perceptions about their lives and the environments in which they live. In the child abuse literature, there is a growing view that without appreciating the ways that children perceive and experience abuse, strategies to effectively prevent and respond to child sexual abuse are limited (Jernbro, Eriksson, & Janson, 2010).

In designing this study, we were interested in understanding how children perceive institutions, risks to their safety, and the effectiveness of adult and institutional responses to their safety concerns. This was due to the growing body of evidence suggesting that the way children perceive safety issues influences their confidence in adults and institutions, and their help-seeking and disclosure behaviours (Williams & Cornell, 2006). For example, previous studies have concluded that when children and young people perceive problems to be severe, they are more likely to seek assistance than when they deem them to be less significant (Cometto, 2014). This is problematic because studies have also shown that children and young people often misjudge risks and mislabel potentially abusive behaviours as appropriate, insignificant or as their own fault (Ungar, Tutty, McConnell, Barter, & Fairholm, 2009). Findings show that adults and institutions need to understand how children perceive safety to better assist them to assess and manage risks (Jacobs, Hashima, & Kenning, 1995).

Similarly, it has also been shown that children and young people's perceptions about how adults will respond to their safety concerns influence their disclosure and help-seeking behaviours (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Studies suggest that when they believe adults are unable to emotionally cope with the information provided, they are reluctant to disclose (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt, & Tjersland, 2005). When they perceive that others will consider the encounter as trivial or as the young person's fault, children and young people are less likely to share the experience with others or seek support (Schönbucher, Maier, Mohler-Kuo, Schnyder, & Landolt, 2012). Fear of negative reactions from others, including doubt, disbelief or indifference (Hlavka, 2016), are also powerful disincentives, as are fears of stigmatisation, breaches of confidentiality and fears of being seen as 'attention-seeking' (Rowe et al., 2014). Studies have also shown that children and young people are less likely to disclose to adults and institutions they perceive are incompetent, and when they have little faith that the adults or institutions can adequately respond or protect them (Ungar et al., 2009).

2.2 Existing research

As discussed in the 'Background' of the focus group report (Moore, McArthur, Noble-Carr, & Harcourt, 2015), there is a paucity of existing studies that consider children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutional contexts. In addition, no existing studies begin by asking children and young people to identify their safety concerns and reflect on the ways that institutions prevent and respond to their safety needs.

However, a number of studies provide a description of the context within which this study can be situated. For example, prevalence studies provide evidence that the issues participants in our focus groups believed were pressing and relevant to the Royal Commission were commonly experienced (namely, adults taking advantage of children and young people; child-to-child sexual harassment and victimisation; and bullying). Similarly, the school climate and risk literatures affirm participants' views that to be safe and to feel safe, children and young people need trustworthy relationships with adults; organisational cultures that value children and young people; policies that are considered reliable; and

strategies for identifying and responding to safety issues that are informed by children and young people and inspire their confidence.

2.2.1 Prevalence studies

Over the past 20 years, research has increasingly focused on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in institutions, particularly schools. These studies have consistently found that children and young people are vulnerable to adult-to-child sexual abuse. More recently, these studies have explored the emerging issue of child-to-child sexual violence (for example, Chen & Wei, 2011; Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2014; Tillyer, Gialopsos, & Wilcox, 2013; Tillyer, Wilcox, & Gialopsos, 2010; Vega-Gea, Ortega-Ruiz, & Sánchez, 2016).

These studies have shown that 5–8 per cent of students reported they had experienced some form of child sexual abuse in school (Chen & Wei, 2011; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006) and 23–87 per cent have experienced sexual harassment or peer sexual victimisation (Clear et al., 2014). They have generally shown that older young people are more likely to report sexual maltreatment by a peer or peers, or staff (Chen & Wei, 2011; Finkelhor et al., 2014). However, they note that when asked to report on their experiences in the past year, younger teens tended to report more experiences of abuse than older teens (Attar-Schwartz, 2009; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006).

Contrary to public perception, a number of studies show that boys and girls experience comparable amounts of sexual harassment. However, young men are more likely than young women to report perpetrating harassment and assault (Attar-Schwartz, 2009; Chen & Wei, 2011; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002). In their study, McMaster et al. (2002) differentiated same-gender and cross-gender harassment. Same-gender harassment tended to be about bullying while cross-gender harassment tended to relate to a display of sexual interest. As young people aged, the rates of same-gender sexual harassment decreased while cross-gender harassment increased. This may account for the high incidence of sexual victimisation reported by boys, particularly in early adolescence.

There is recognition that child sexual abuse and peer sexual violence exist in certain institutions where children and young people interact; however, there are no comprehensive large-scale studies that quantify the contemporary prevalence in settings such as sports teams, church groups, holiday programs and other youth organisations (Wurtele, 2012).

In their review of the literature, Barth et al. (2013) said they couldn't find any Australian studies that sought reports of abuse from young people directly (either in school or elsewhere).

2.2.2 Perceptions of risk

A number of quantitative and qualitative studies have attempted to understand how children and young people experience and manage risk. Studies have generally focused on children's views about risk in public spaces, neighbourhoods and communities (Farver, Ghosh, & Garcia, 2000; Milne, 2009; Nayak, 2003; Negreiros, 2010), particularly where there are high rates of crime, gang behaviour and violence (Bromley & Stacey, 2011; Bromley & Stacey, 2012; Conolly & Parkes, 2012; Farver et al., 2000; Johansson, Laflamme, & Eliasson, 2012; Kelly, 2010; Neary, 2013; Olvera, 2012; Rogers, 2012). Other studies have looked at home (Kelley, Mayall, & Hood, 1997), families, schools (Leonard, 2006; Miller, 2011; Wiebe, 2013) and residential care programs but have generally focused on external rather than internal threats (Harden, 2000; Scott, Jackson, & Backett-Milburn, 1998; Turner, Hill, Stafford, & Walker, 2006).

In studies where children have helped tease out notions of safety, they generally relate safety to relationships (with trusted adults or peers); to having some control over their environments and a say

in decisions that affect them; to having accurate information about what risks and safety concerns exist around them; and to how adults (sometimes including, but not always, the police and others employed to ensure safety) are helping to reduce the level of risk in their environments (Blanchet-Cohen, 2013; Chan, Lam, & Shae, 2011; Collins, 2001; Eriksson, Hochwälder, & Sellström, 2011; Harris & Manatakis, 2013; Jobe & Gorin, 2012; Meltzer, Vostanis, Goodman, & Ford, 2007; Negreiros, 2010; Spilsbury, 2002; Taber-Thomas, 2013).

In the last 10 years, a number of researchers have begun to explore how children and young people negotiate and mitigate interpersonal, environmental and physical risks (Christensen & Mikkelsen, 2007; Pain, 2004). One of the arguments underpinning these studies is that risk is a necessary and appropriate part of childhood, and that, in a risk-averse society, children may be at greater risk when overly protective adults restrict their movements, limit their relationships with positive adults and develop harm minimisation strategies that isolate them rather than keep them safe (Brownlie, 2001).

Studies generally find that children and young people perceive and experience safety in different ways to their parents and other adults, and that to keep children and young people safe, adults and institutions need to start with an understanding of how they understand and manage risks themselves (Leonard, 2007; Morris, Humphreys, & Hegarty, 2015; Turner et al., 2006).

2.2.3 School climate studies

Over the past three decades a growing number of studies have attempted to capture students' perceptions of school climate. For example, in 2013 Thapa et al. (2013) found more than 220 articles that considered school climate. This meta-analysis showed that in addition to improving students' educational outcomes, a positive school climate can reduce young people's exposure to a raft of negative experiences, including sexual harassment and victimisation. Across the articles reviewed, safety is seen as a central characteristic of a positive school climate, but an element that students often score as being compromised within the school context (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Johnson, 2014; Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008; Wilson, 2004).

These studies also showed that in schools with supportive norms and structures, and where staff and students enjoyed positive relationships, victimisation (among other issues) was less likely (Attar-Schwartz, 2009; Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012). Similarly, Gregory et al. (Thapa et al., 2013) found that consistent enforcement of school discipline and availability of caring adults was associated with a positive view of school safety.

The school climate literature also highlights the differing perspectives of teachers and other adults in schools and young people in relation to issues such as violence and bullying, with adults more likely to consider these issues as 'mild' or 'moderately severe', while students consider them 'severe' (Cohen, J in Thapa et al., 2013).

2.3 Key findings from Stage Two of the project: Focus groups

The ASK-YP Survey was designed to reflect the elements of an institution that were responsive to children and young people's safety needs, which were highlighted in Stage Two of the project.

In Stage Two, ICPS and its partners conducted 10 focus groups with pre-schoolers, children and young people in the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. One hundred and twenty-one children and young people, ranging in age from 4 to 18 years, participated in focus group discussions in a variety of institutional and jurisdictional contexts. Participants interacted with early learning centres, schools, sporting groups, holiday camps, church groups, child welfare agencies

and hospitals. Specific focus groups were conducted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people with disability, young people in out-of-home care and young carers. Three reference groups provided advice on the methodology and methods, and trialled proposed tools.

In these focus groups, researchers attempted to explore how children and young people understand and perceive safety in institutional contexts, to identify their safety needs and to consider how institutions currently identify, prevent and respond to children's safety issues.

2.3.1 How do children conceptualise safety and a lack of safety?

Participants differentiated between feeling safe and being safe, and defined safety in relation to how they felt and how they behaved in response to a person, place or experience, as well as the things that surrounded them.

Participants defined 'unsafe' in relation to dangers, risks and a lack of safe people and strategies to keep them safe. Like safety, they often talked about being unsafe in relation to feelings: of being frightened, worried, anxious and angry about their circumstances.

Children and young people identified risks such as being hurt, abducted, bullied, lost, forced to do unsafe things they didn't want to do, encountering creepy adults or experiencing racism.

Children and young people generally saw the world outside the spaces, people and activities they were familiar with and trusted, as unsafe or potentially unsafe. Adults that didn't take responsibility for children and young people's safety, particularly when they assumed a supervisory or support role, were seen as unsafe.

Participants often characterised safety in relation to others: they felt most safe when they had adults and peers around them that they trusted and who would protect them from danger; that they had faith in these people because they knew they cared about children; that they knew them well enough to identify when they were unsafe; that they took time to be with children and took their worries and concerns seriously, acting on them when appropriate.

On the other hand, adults who were unpredictable or who did not demonstrate adult-like behaviours were also seen as unsafe. Adults were also seen as unsafe when they used their power or influence against children and young people. This included adults who bullied children, those who displayed favouritism and those who threatened children and made them feel powerless.

Children and young people felt most safe when they knew what was happening, why it was happening and how to navigate any emerging safety issues. Choice and control were also seen as enabling children to feel safe or less unsafe in unsafe circumstances and environments.

Power was an issue highlighted in most groups. Often it was adults (such as teachers, but also coaches, older young people and the police) who were identified as using their physical presence and power to intimidate children and young people, particularly those who challenge their authority. Children and young people felt that to be safe they needed to feel a level of power and control. They felt that when children were being hurt they were powerless, and that as well as responding to a situation, adults needed to give children some power so that they wouldn't remain in a powerless position.

Children and young people reported that they often understood safety in similar ways to adults. However, they felt there were also differences. Children and young people stressed the fact that although being safe and feeling safe were related and interlinked; they needed to be understood differently. They believed that adults were often more focused on the observable threats surrounding children, rather than how children feel and what they need to feel safe. They believed that adults sometimes did not recognise or value children's concerns, which was problematic. Without an

appreciation of children's perceived safety needs, participants believed that institutions' responses were limited.

Participants reported that there were times when they were safe but felt unsafe, because:

- their fears were under-appreciated by adults and were left unresolved
- they were aware of risks but not of the ways in which adults were managing those risks and protecting them from harm
- they felt as though there was no one around them to protect them
- people, places and things around them were strange or unfamiliar.

Similarly, there were times when they felt safe but later conceded that they were most likely unsafe. This occurred when:

- they were unaware of the risks
- they misjudged people and places
- they successfully used strategies to 'switch off' their feelings
- they failed to see the consequences of their risky behaviours.

By not allowing children to better understand real risks, or to raise their concerns, participants felt that adults enabled children to be in vulnerable positions and ultimately to be and feel unsafe.

They also believed that sometimes adults failed to appreciate children's feelings of safety and, in not appreciating them, tried to quell rather than explore children's fears and the ways they would like them to be managed. Participants felt that adults based their assessments on their own past experiences, or their judgments of people, places and activities, and were not as good at picking up on their own feelings or children's reactions.

2.3.2 Perceptions of safety in institutions

In these environments, children and young people most often raised concerns about bullying (by peers or by adults); coming across 'creepy adults' who could hurt them or make them uncomfortable; being pressured into doing things they didn't want to do (that had negative consequences); being hurt because adults weren't doing their job; or of the institution failing to protect them from external threats (such as kidnapping, road accidents or violent strangers).

Most participants reported feeling safe at their schools but talked about experiences in previous or other schools that were unsafe. Children and young people generally believed that institutions were not effective in dealing with issues such as bullying or harassment, but could identify measures that were in place to support them. Young women appeared to have more faith in institutions and suggested that they may be more aware of the issues than their male peers because they were more likely to have encountered problems and had institutions respond to them.

A small number of participants voiced a general lack of faith in institutions, and felt they prioritised the needs of the institution before children and young people. Children and young people generally believed that institutions should side with children and young people in the first instance, taking their concerns more seriously, and acting on children and young people's wishes until an investigation was complete.

2.3.3 Characteristics of a safe institution

Participants generally agreed that institutions were safe when a number of conditions were met. It was vital for children to see these conditions demonstrated, helping them not only to be safe but to also feel safe. A safe institution was one that:

- focused on helping children and young people
- valued children and young people and their participation
- provided a safe environment for children and young people
- proactively protected children and young people from unsafe people and experiences
- employed safe and trusted adults
- was open to monitoring by an external agency.

2.3.4 Advice to adults on how to best support children and young people

Participants gave examples of times when adults helped them to manage their safety concerns and when they stepped in to protect them from harm. However, they reflected that there were a number of things that adults did not always do well and believed that even when an adult's natural reaction was to intervene and take control of a situation, it was important that they:

- actively listen – to ensure they fully appreciate children and young people's thoughts, feelings, needs and ideas on how issues might be dealt with
- help the child or young person to determine the nature and seriousness of the situation to help them build their skills and respond in future situations when adults were not around
- help the child or young person to develop their skills to manage unsafe situations
- offer solutions that are realistic and respond to the child or young person's concerns.

Participants recognised there were a number of things that kept children and young people from seeking and receiving support for their problems. These included feelings of shame and embarrassment, a lack of confidence in adults and their ability to help, fears of retribution, fears of things getting worse due to an adult's intervention or negative past experiences.

They felt that unhelpful adults were those who were not accessible to children or young people; didn't have the knowledge to assess a situation; were not comfortable in dealing with painful experiences; didn't believe it was their job to help kids; or believed that someone else was responding to the situation. Participants felt that these adults made seeking support a significant challenge for children and young people.

3. Stage Three online survey

3.1 Overview

The ASK-YP Survey is the first survey that aims to explore the aspects of institutions and institutional responses that children and young people believe are essential to help them feel and be safe. Rather than beginning with preconceived ideas about what children and young people need to be safe, and testing the extent to which these adult-derived indicators are in place, the ASK-YP Survey was informed by the findings from 10 focus groups with children and young people.

The ASK-YP Survey sought to obtain participants' perceptions of safety within institutions, across a variety of contexts and scenarios. It was administered online to children and young people aged 10–18. Participants were recruited directly through schools, youth organisations and online through electronic marketing.

The following sections discuss how the survey was developed, ethical considerations, the nature of the survey and our recruitment strategy.

3.2 Youth engagement

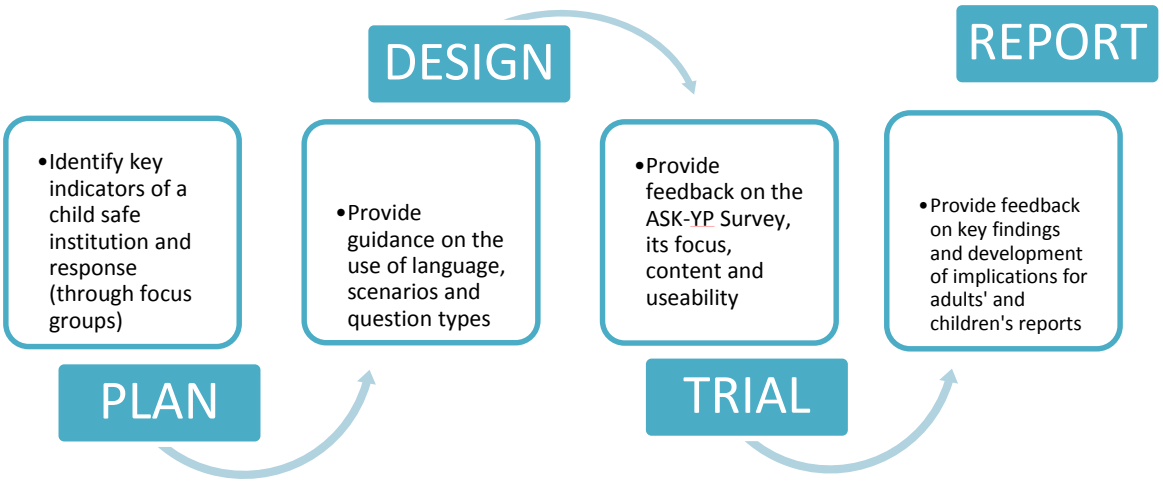
Children and young people's active participation was central to this project, and reflects the view that research projects conducted in collaboration with children and young people yield better outcomes and enable the development of a more child-centred theory (Moore, McArthur, & Noble-Carr, 2008).

The elements of the survey were developed to reflect the identified safety needs of children and young people that emerged from the Stage Two focus groups.

In addition, children and young people's reference groups gave us invaluable advice in constructing the survey: the language we used; the questions we asked; the scenarios presented; and the strategies we adopted for recruiting children and young people.

The key tasks are noted in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Influence of children and young people's reference groups



The survey was developed in consultation with children and young people, and included two of the broader children and young people's reference groups, which met the researchers to:

- consider which elements identified in focus groups were most crucial to enabling children's safety[1]
- provide guidance and feedback on the nature, language and understandability of survey questions, particularly the case studies
- trial the survey tool, including with a group of 10-year-olds.

Researchers also worked closely with the Royal Commission and a group of researchers who successfully designed and implemented surveys with children and young people in the past. Feedback was provided by members of the adults' reference group.

3.3 Research questions and hypotheses

The survey addressed two main research questions:

1. What are children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions?
2. What do children and young people consider is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions?

The first question sought to investigate (a) how safe children and young people felt in their nominated institutions, and (b) the extent to which institutions demonstrate characteristics that suggest they are safe for children and young people and are equipped to prevent and respond to children's safety concerns when they emerge.

[1] The young people in the third reference group were recruited from a supported education program. Unfortunately, this program was defunded in 2015 and the participants moved back to mainstream schools. This meant that we were no longer able to facilitate the group.

In focus groups, perceptions of safety appeared to differ according to age and gender. Children generally reported that they felt safe most of the time, even though they believed their physical size and lack of experience, skills and knowledge about how to identify risks and protect themselves should they encounter an unsafe person, threat or situation, often rendered them vulnerable. They generally reported trusting that adults and institutions would prevent them from being hurt and had faith that adults and institutions would step in to protect them, particularly in institutional contexts (at school, on camps, in sports teams or other youth groups).

Similarly, high school-aged participants felt that younger children were more vulnerable because they were less aware of the risks, and, because they were less likely to have encountered unsafe people or experiences, were less equipped to draw on their own experiences or use strategies they had used before. Older participants also appeared to have less faith in adults and institutions in appreciating risks and responding to them, and reported that they were more likely to manage concerns themselves.

Even though all but one of the focus groups was of mixed gender, there appeared to be some differences in perceptions of safety for males and females. For example, young women felt that boys were less likely to worry about their own personal safety (including bullying, sexual harassment and assault) because they were physically stronger and didn't appear to spend much time worrying about things in the way that girls did. A few participants (of both genders) noted that girls were more likely to have been or to have felt unsafe in the past; therefore, they may feel more prepared to deal with problems if they arose. However, they still believed that boys would feel safer in institutions than girls (as opposed to out on the street, where they were more likely to be physically assaulted).

As such, it was hypothesised that differences would exist across children and young people's perceptions of safety across institutions – with younger participants and females displaying higher perceptions of safety within their nominated institutions than older participants and males.

As discussed in Section 2.3, children and young people in the focus groups identified elements they believed demonstrated institutions were safe for children and young people, and actions they believed adults should take to identify and respond to children's safety issues in practice. Based on these findings, we expected these characteristics to be associated with greater perceptions of safety.

The second research question sought to investigate (a) participants' perceptions of the likelihood of uncomfortable adult-to-student and peer-to-peer interactions in a young person's school environment; (b) what students would need if they encountered a teacher or peer who made them feel unsafe; (c) school-based approaches to preventing and responding to these interactions; and (d) young people's help-seeking preferences.

It was hypothesised that participants would report a greater degree of uncomfortable adult-to-student interactions compared with child-to-child interactions at school. We based this hypothesis on discussions we had with focus group participants, who were more likely to identify adults than peers as being unsafe. As noted, previous studies have shown young people are more likely to experience peer sexual violence than child abuse perpetrated by adults, but there is also evidence that young people understate occurrences of peer-based assault.

Based on findings from the focus groups, we expected that participants' gender would result in differences to perceptions of school-based approaches to preventing and responding to unsafe encounters. In focus groups, young men had less confidence in adults and institutions understanding their safety concerns, or implementing strategies that would respond to risks. As such, we expected that females would be more likely to perceive their school as preventing and responding to uncomfortable adult-to-student and peer-to-peer interactions.

Lastly, we hypothesised that participants' gender would influence who young people sought help from, with females expected to seek help at higher rates compared with males. This is based on previous studies that have considered disclosure and help-seeking based on gender (McElvaney, Greene, & Hogan, 2013).

3.4 Measures

All survey measures were developed for use in this study.

3.4.1 Demographics

Children and young people were asked to provide information on a number of demographic variables. These included age, gender, postcode for their home address, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and language spoken at home.

3.4.2 Covariates

Place or activity

Participants were asked to choose a place or an activity to consider when answering survey items. Response options were prefaced by the statement: 'In the next section we'll be asking you to think about a place or an activity and tell us how well you think they are doing in keeping children and young people safe. It would be good if it was a place or a program where you have been in the last 6 months.' Four response options included 'Your school', 'Holiday camps', 'Your church or church youth group' and 'Your sports team or recreational group'. Participants chose one place or a program to use across survey items.

Elements of child safety

Participants' *perceptions of the responsiveness of institutions to children and young people's safety needs* were measured using eight items. Prefacing these items was the question: 'How true are the following statements for your [institution]?' Examples of these items included 'Adults care about children and young people' and 'Children and young people have at least one adult who they trust'. Items were scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing 'I'm not sure' and 4 representing 'All of the time'. Participant responses were examined across scale scores as percentages.

Responses to safety issues and risks

The elements that children and young people considered were *already being done to respond to safety issues and risks* in institutions were measured using nine items. These items were developed to reflect the safety needs of children and young people identified in focus groups. Items were prefaced with the question: 'Based on this scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements, for your school?' Examples items included 'Adults at my school would know what to do if I told them I was unsafe', 'Adults at my school would probably not believe me' and 'I would know what to do because we've talked about it in class'. Items were rated on a six-point scale, with 1 representing 'I'm not sure' and 6 representing 'Strongly agree'. Participant responses were examined across scale scores as percentages.

School responses to safety issues and risks

In light of the high prevalence of both at-school child sexual abuse and peer sexual violence reported in the literature (for example, Chen & Wei, 2011; Finkelhor et al., 2014; Tillyer et al., 2013; Tillyer et al., 2010; Vega-Gea et al., 2016) – and because children and young people in focus groups identified schools as being the place they were most likely to be and to experience safety concerns – we decided to further consider child sexual abuse and peer sexual violence in the school setting.

One item was used to examine what children and young people consider their *school is doing to respond to safety issues and risks* in institutions. The statement 'Finish this sentence: I think my school is doing … ' prefaced four response options: (1) 'enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe'; (2) 'some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe'; (3) 'nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe'; and (4) 'I'm not sure'. Response options were coded on a four-point scale, with 0 representing 'I'm not sure' and 3 representing 'Enough'. Participant responses were examined across scale scores as percentages.

3.4.3 Outcome

The item 'I feel safe most of the time' contained in the *Responses to safety issues and risks* scale was examined as an outcome variable in some analyses (refer Section 3.5). For the purpose of the analysis, the item was recoded as a dichotomous variable, where negative response options ('I'm not sure' and 'Never') were coded as 0, and positive response options ('Some of the time' and 'All of the time') were coded as 1.

3.4.4 Scenarios

Scenarios were used in the survey as they have been shown to be effective in simulating hypothetical events to discover how participants might react to those events and learn their attitudes, values and perceptions (Hughes & Huby, 2002). In this study, consultations with the project's children and young people's reference groups allowed researchers to refine the content of the scenarios to ensure they had a high face validity and strong relevance to the participant group (Hughes & Huby, 2002). The reference group advised that the scenarios be specific, provide concrete examples of risks to safety, and also incorporate an adequate degree of uncertainty. The scenarios were piloted with two groups of children before their use in the survey. Louise Grant from Fuzz Illustrations animated the scenarios with dialogue; written text also appeared below the animations.

Participants were presented with one of two scenarios (either Michael or Sally) presenting a hypothetical uncomfortable student-to-teacher interaction, and one of two scenarios (either Jason or Mary) presenting a hypothetical uncomfortable peer-to-peer interaction.

The gender of the student and peer was randomly assigned (either Michael or Sally, or Jason or Mary). The scenarios presented only male teachers and male peer scenarios to reduce the number of variables included in the survey, and in recognition that men and boys are more likely than women and girls to abuse children and young people, or engage in sexual peer violence (Peter, 2008). An example scenario is:

> *Sally is in the school play and rehearses after school. Her teacher tells her that she is very talented and seems really encouraging. But Sally sometimes feels a bit uncomfortable with her teacher – he always singles Sally out for special attention and encouragement. He's a nice guy and everyone likes him. But Sally is uncomfortable because sometimes her teacher stands really close to her and compliments her in ways that makes her feel weird. Sally's teacher has started arranging one-on-one rehearsals with Sally where Sally has to practice the romantic*

scenes with him, like saying 'I love you'. Sally's teacher says these rehearsals are important to be ready for the performance.

Participants were requested to respond to a series of statements (using Likert scales) that focused on (1) how likely it was children and young people would be in a situation like that; (2) who they would seek support from if they were in a similar situation; (3) what they would need from adults if faced with a situation like that; (4) what they would need from institutions if faced with a situation like that; and (5) barriers to help-seeking.

1. Three items were used to examine *how likely* children and young people considered the presented scenario to be. The statement 'How likely is it that' prefaced the items 'A child or young person at your school would be in a situation like this?', 'You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this?' and 'You would talk to someone if this happened to you?' Items were rated on a five-point scale with 0 representing 'I'm not sure' and 4 representing 'very likely'.

2. One item was used to example who children and young people would *seek support from* for the presented scenario. The item 'If you were in a situation like this and were going to tell someone, who would it most likely be?' was followed by 10 response options. Participants were able to select as many response options as relevant; for example, 'A friend', 'My mum' and 'A teacher'. Participant responses were dichotomised to 'Yes' when the participant chose the response option and 'No' when they did not. Each response option was dealt with independently, so there were multiple affirmative responses. For the purpose of this report, response options were treated independently of each other.

3. Eight items were used to measure what children and young people felt they would *need from adults* in response to the presented scenario. Each item was prefaced with the question 'If you were in a situation like this, what do you think you would need most?' Examples of responses included 'To know whether what your teacher was doing was OK or not' and 'To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation'. Participants were able to choose up to three response options relevant to their perception of the situation. Participant responses were dichotomised to 'Yes' when participants chose the response option and 'No' when they did not.

4. Nine items were used to measure what children and young people felt they would *need from institutions* in response to the presented scenario. Each item was prefaced with the statement 'Based on the scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?' Examples of responses included 'I would know what to do because we've talked about it in class' and 'Adults at my school would see it as their job to do something about a situation like this'. Items were rated on a six-point scale with 0 representing 'I'm not sure' and 5 representing 'Strongly agree'.

5. Six items were used to investigate what children and young people consider are *barriers to help-seeking* in institutions. The following statement prefaced items: 'If you were in a situation like this, there might be a number of things that kept you from getting help. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?' An example item included 'I would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at school about things like this'. Items were rated on a six-point scale with 0 representing 'I'm not sure' and 5 representing 'Strongly agree'.

3.5 Ethics

This study was conducted with the approval of the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Ethics approvals were also granted by relevant state and territory government

education departments and the Catholic Education Office in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. See below for the recruitment and sampling approach.

Table 1: List of human ethics committee approvals

Institutions granting human ethics approval	Jurisdiction
Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee	Australia-wide
Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn	Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales
Australian Capital Territory Education and Training Directorate	Australian Capital Territory
Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Victoria
Tasmanian Department of Education	Tasmania
Western Australian Department of Education	Western Australia
New South Wales Department of Education	New South Wales

3.6 Recruitment

This study used a convenience sampling approach in which a wide range of institutions were invited to participate and recruit young people. We also invited young people to participate using social media and electronic marketing.

This approach was chosen to ensure a wide range of children and young people were invited to participate. It was not the intention of this study to recruit state-wide representative samples. The institutions approached to participate were selected as they reflected a range of institutional settings with large numbers of children and young people. These included schools, non-government organisations, sports organisations, holiday camp organisations and faith-based youth organisations.

3.6.1 School and institutional recruitment

Schools and institutions that planned to conduct the survey directly with children and young people registered their interest and provided contact details in an online form managed by researchers. This allowed researchers to provide correspondence and support, as well as survey resources directly to the school or organisation. Other organisations promoted the survey to members or participants using a newsletter or email. Information packs were posted or emailed to participating schools or organisations and included:

- consent forms for participation
- a letter to principals and teachers explaining the nature and purpose of the online survey
- a survey protocol, including instructions on how children and young people complete the survey at school
- a letter or brochure for children and young people to describe the study, its nature and purpose, and what they were being asked to do
- an information letter for parents.

The recruitment of young people through schools was assisted by the national, state and territory Children and Young People's Commissioners, who made contact with schools and encouraged their participation.

3.6.2 Direct online recruitment of young people

The survey was also promoted online with advertising on Facebook and Mi9 websites (including ninemsn, Xbox, Skype, Outlook) that targeted young people aged 15–18, inviting them to participate. A website was developed to provide information, instructions for completing the survey and a link to the survey. The advertisements had about 2.4 million impressions (views), with almost 1,300 'click-throughs' to the survey.

Previous studies have shown that many young people drop out of surveys if the number of times they have to click on webpages is high (Ramo, Rodriguez, Chavez, Sommer, & Prochaska, 2014). As we needed to present young people with information about the study, channel them through to the survey if they were aged over 15, and then have them complete a consent form – or send them to a parent's consent page if they were a minor – the number of clicks was four. This may account for the low rate of survey completion by those directed to the website.

3.6.3 Recruitment of young people through adults and organisations

In addition to recruiting participants directly, we sought assistance from a range of programs and networks with direct contact with young people, as well as organisations and networks with contact with parents or workers who could help support young people's participation. Examples included youth peak bodies, clearinghouses, member-based organisations, parenting groups and sporting associations.

Details of the survey were placed on the Parenthub and The Conversation websites, and in ICPS media releases. In addition, it was promoted on Twitter, reaching 148,000 Twitter accounts.

We hoped that parents, workers and other adults would pass on information about the study received via these avenues to their children or young clients.

3.6.4 Participant consent

Parental consent was required for all participants aged under 15. The online survey requested parental consent of participants aged under 15 at the beginning of the survey and before allowing the participant to proceed to survey questions. Parents and guardians of children aged under 15 were asked to complete an online consent form or a paper consent form provided by the participating school or organisation, which was scanned and returned by email.

Participants aged over 15 did not require parental consent unless it was requested by the participating school. All participants were asked to provide their own informed consent at the start of the survey and to acknowledge that they could stop the survey at any time, as well as not answer questions if they did not want to. Participating schools and organisations were relied upon to seek consent from parents for children's participation.

3.6.5 Survey administration

The online survey was developed and delivered using the online survey platform Qualtrics.

The survey took about 25 minutes to complete. Participation was voluntary and participants completed it without interacting with others. The survey included information about the voluntary nature of the questions. This information was also provided to parents and participants in letters

handed out before starting the survey. The survey included instructions on how to answer the questions; participants could choose which questions to answer and which to skip, and could stop at any time, without penalty. This allowed participants to manage their inputs and responses throughout their participation. All participants who completed a post-survey questionnaire were sent an email with suggestions and information on accessing youth-centred support or assistance if they were feeling distressed or upset after completing the survey.

3.7 Statistical analysis

3.7.1 Treatment of missing data

The survey completion rate was 78 per cent. Data were excluded from the analyses where participants: (1) responded to the invitation to participate in the survey with the response 'no, I don't want to be involved'; (2) were outside the specified age range for participation; and (3) provided responses only to the items 'How old are you?' and/or 'Are you: male, female, other'. Of the 1,191 students who agreed to participate in the study and who were in the correct age range, 49 (4.11 per cent) were excluded due to missing data on one or more items leaving 1,142 participants for the analyses.

3.7.2 Analyses

Data analysis was performed with the Stata/IC 11.0 for Windows program (StataCorp, 2009). Children and young people's views on (a) the elements of child safety in institutions; (b) what is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions; (c) barriers to them seeking help in institutions; (d) help-seeking preferences; (e) what schools are doing to respond to safety issues and risks; and (f) what should be done to respond to safety issues; were examined using percentages. Participant responses were examined across scale scores as percentages, for the full sample, and where applicable, by institution, gender and age.

The percentages of participants' perceptions by age, gender, institution and scenario were compared using chi-square analyses. Adjusted logistic regression models were run to investigate associations between children and young people's views on what gave rise to perceptions of safety in institutions (covariates) and feeling safe in institutions (outcome variable). All logistic regression analyses were controlled for gender, and the place or activity that participants chose to use when responding to survey items. Logistic regression analysis allows for the adjustment of continuous covariates, hence all covariates were measured as continuous variables in the presented analyses. Totals displayed in tables may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding up or down.

3.7.3 Power analyses

A priori power analyses were conducted using G*Power (version 3.1.9.2) to determine the required sample size for predetermined effect size (Cohen's d) and error in probability levels for the conduct of the following sets of analyses: chi-square (χ^2) test of difference between two independent groups. Based on a moderate effect size of 0.30 and 0.05 error in probability, a sample of 503 was required. This sample would provide sufficient (80 per cent) power for proposed analyses to detect effect sizes. Greater participation rates were acknowledged as increasing the power of analyses to be conducted.

4. Participation

4.1 Participation rates

Table 2 presents the number, location and type of school directly invited to participate. In addition, Commissioners for Children and Young People in Western Australia and Tasmania also contacted schools in their jurisdictions and invited them to participate. Unfortunately, this strategy only yielded one participating school in Tasmania and no schools in Western Australia.

Table 2: School participation, by state

State/territory	School type	Number of schools invited to participate	Number of registered schools	Number of registered schools where students completed survey and used identifying code
ACT	Government	74	1	1
	Non-government	42	2	2
NSW	Government	2,221	5	1
	Non-government	329	4	2
Vic	Government	1,739	4	0
	Non-government	215	2	0
Qld	Non-government	239	2	1
Tas	Non-government	33	1	0
Total		**4,892**	**21**	**7**

There may have been schools that participated and chose not to register, as well as schools that registered but had no young people participate. For schools that registered, the number of students who participated in the survey ranged from two (one school) to 371 (one school). Most registered schools resulted in the participation of between 20 and 30 young people. One-quarter of participants were from a single school. Analysis comparing this large cohort with the rest of the sample found a variation of less than 10 per cent difference for demographic and key variables.

In epidemiological research, data may be 'clustered'. Clustered data arise when the data from the whole study can be classified into a number of different groups, referred to as 'clusters'. Each cluster contains multiple observations, giving the data a 'nested' or 'hierarchical' structure, with individual observations nested within the cluster. The key feature of clustered data is that observations within a cluster are 'more alike' than observations from different clusters (Galbraith, Daniel, & Vissel, 2010). In the ASK-YP Survey, we know some of the data is clustered within class groups and within schools; some children who participated may also have been clustered within families, friendship networks or geographic areas, however, the extent of this is unknown. One of four approaches are generally used in the analysis of clustered data: (a) ignoring clustering; (b) reducing clusters to independent

observations; (c) fixed effects regression/ANOVA approaches; and (d) explicitly accounting for clustering (Galbraith et al., 2010). Data were checked across the different schools identified as participating to determine whether there were any differences in the pattern of results. No differences in the pattern of results were identified, and therefore clustering was ignored.

A number of schools reported that they were unable to participate because: (a) they were committed to participating in other studies and could not justify devoting more class time to research; (b) they believed the study was too sensitive and they could not reassure parents that children would not experience distress; or (c) they believed their school community might be reluctant to engage in a study that might highlight potential problems. Two schools reported that they had a policy that students couldn't access the internet during class time, which meant they could not participate in an online study. For these reasons, the number of schools that participated was much lower than anticipated and highlights the challenges of recruiting participants for studies deemed to be sensitive, as reported elsewhere (Murray, 2005). As indicated in Table 2, the participation rate for schools was 0.1 per cent (seven out of 4,892). This low participation rate means the results of the survey should be interpreted with caution.

Children and young people were also recruited online (using social media or online marketing), through youth organisations and via parents, workers and other adults. Of the participants who completed a post-survey questionnaire and answered the question, 'How did you hear about the survey?' (n=298):

- 68 per cent were recruited at school
- 9 per cent were recruited through Facebook or via electronic marketing
- 8 per cent were recruited through a service or youth group
- 7 per cent were recruited by a parent
- 7 per cent were recruited 'another way'.

It was impossible to find out where these young people lived.

4.2 Participants

A total of 1,480 children and young people began the survey. Analysis is based on a sample of 1,142 participants who completed the survey (following the exclusion of missing data). The mean age of participants was 14.81 years. The age and gender distribution of the sample is shown in Table 3. Of the sample, 46 participants (3.89 per cent) indicated 'other' when asked their gender.

Males aged 13 and 14 were more likely than females of the same age to participate in the survey. Females aged 15 and 16 were more likely than males of the same age to participate. The number of males compared with female participants decreased with age. No statistically significant gender differences were evident for males compared with female participants aged 12 or younger.

Table 3: Age and gender of participants

Gender	Age (years)				
	12 and under %	13 %	14 %	15 %	16 and over %
Males	18.8	19.8**	20.4**	17.2	24.0
Females	18.3	9.9	12.6	22.2**	37.0**
Other	15.2	13.0	17.4	21.7	32.6
Total	18.4	14.2	16.1	20.1	31.3
N	210	162	184	229	357

Note: Percentages reflect the number of male, female and other (non-gender identifying) participants in each age group in the analysed sample. To examine gender differences chi-square analyses were conducted.

**p <.01

Although a representative sampling method was not used, the gender, age and ethnicity of the survey sample was broadly representative of the Australian population aged 10–18.

The Australian population aged 10–18 is made up of 1,246,133 females (48.7 per cent) and 1,314,572 males (51.3 per cent). In the sample, females represent 55.9 per cent and males 44.1 per cent. Drawing on 2011 Census data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 4.46 per cent of the population aged 10–19 (ABS, 2011) (statistics based on ages 10–18 are not presented). Of the survey respondents, 3.3 per cent identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. In Australia, 21 per cent of the total population aged 12–24 speak a language other than English at home (Muir et al., 2009), while our sample was made up 25.3 per cent children and young people who spoke a language other than English at home.

5. Findings from ASK-YP Survey

5.1 Children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions

The first research question we aimed to answer in this quantitative stage of the project was 'What are children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions?' To capture this, we included three sub-questions:

- How safe do children and young people feel in their nominated institutions?
- How often do institutions demonstrate characteristics of an institution that suggests it is safe for children and young people and responds to their safety needs?
- What determines children's sense of safety?

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most children and young people felt safe 'some of the time' or 'all of the time'.
- Overwhelmingly, participants believed their institutions demonstrated characteristics that suggested children and young people were safe there (such as adults caring about children, valuing their opinions and paying attention when they were unsafe). However, males and young people aged 15 and over were less likely to report this than females and children aged under 12.
- The majority of participants felt that adults valued children and young people's opinions 'all the time' in church and sporting environments; however, less than half who identified 'holiday camp' felt this way, and only one-quarter of those who identified 'school' reported this.
- More than half of participants reported that they were more likely to rely on their friends than adults in their institution if they were worried about something.
- Having adults pay attention when children and young people raised concerns or worries were associated with increased perceptions of safety.

5.1.1 How safe do children and young people feel?

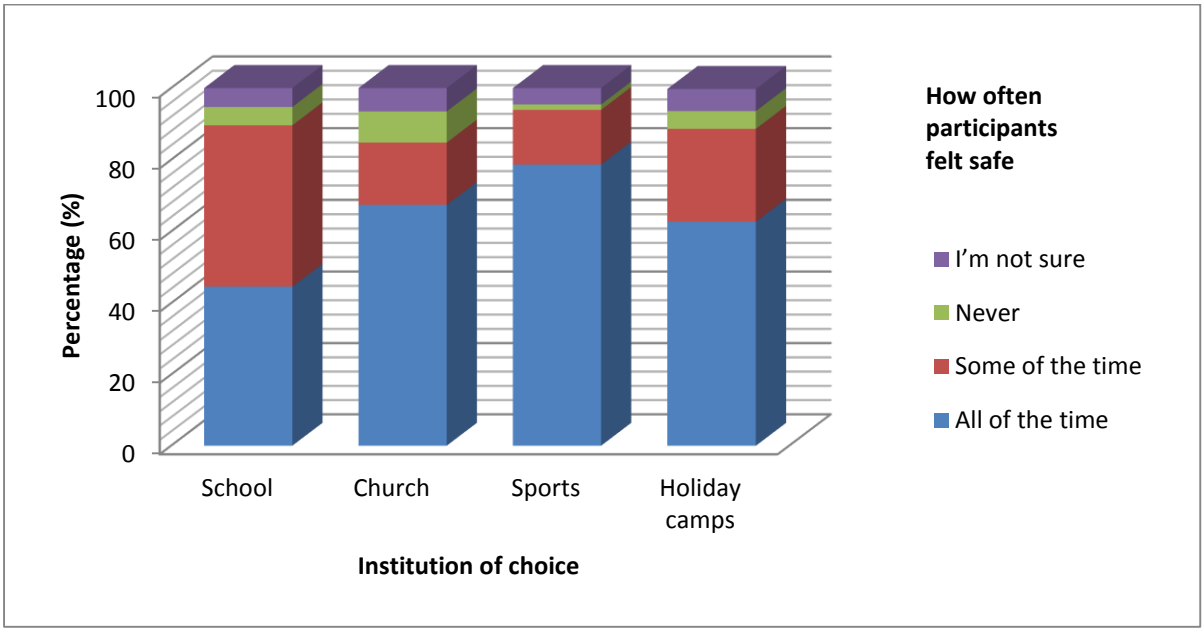
Participants were asked to indicate how often the statement 'I feel safe most of the time' was true for them in an institution of their choice.

Children and young people generally reported feeling safe 'some of the time' or 'all of the time', regardless of some minimal variation from one institution to another.

Those participating in sport (93.9 per cent) reported higher rates of feeling safe than those in school (89.6 per cent), holiday camp (88.9 per cent), and a church group (84.9 per cent).

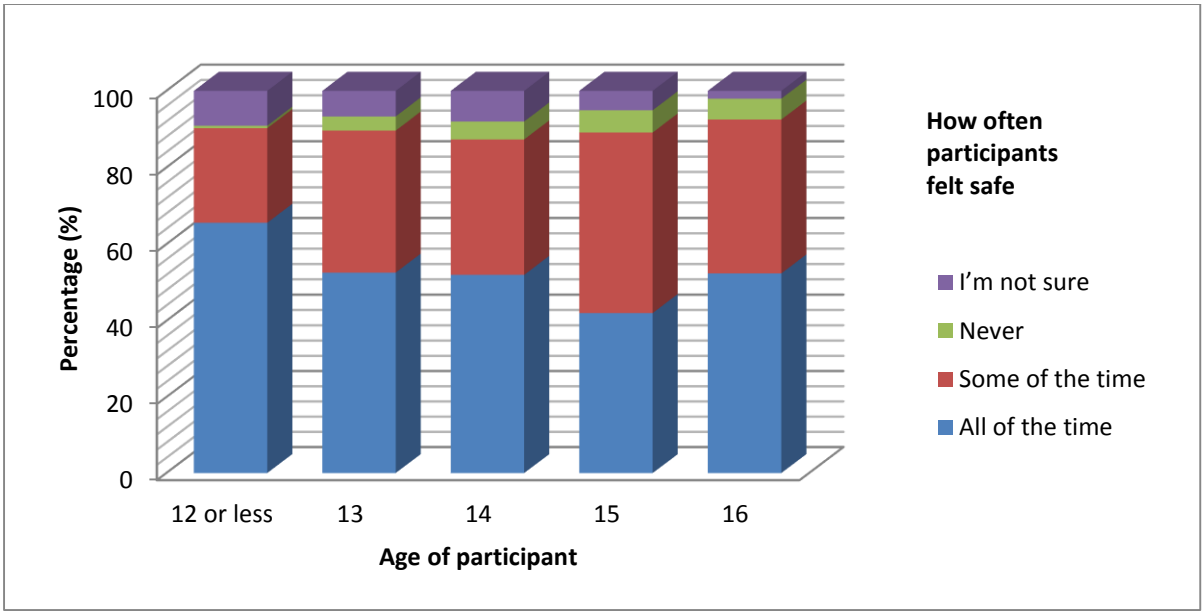
Although most participants reported feeling safe, 9 per cent of young people in churches, 5 per cent of young people in schools and holiday camps, and 1.5 per cent of young people in sports groups, reported that they never felt safe. These young people tended to be older and were slightly more likely to be male.

Figure 3: How often participants felt safe in their chosen institution, by institution



As shown in Figure 4, the percentages of young people feeling safe 'some of the time' and 'all of the time' were not substantially different across age groups. However, young people aged 15 were significantly more likely to report 'never' feeling safe, compared with those aged 12 and under (5.8 per cent compared with 0.7 per cent).

Figure 4: How often participants felt safe in their chosen institution, by age



Compared with female participants, males were more likely to report being unsure about feeling safe. Females reported significantly higher rates of feeling safe 'all of the time', compared with male participants.

Table 4: Participants' perceptions of the extent to which they felt safe, by gender

Gender	I feel safe most of the time			
	I'm not sure %	Never %	Some of the time %	All of the time %
Males (n=463)	8.4***	5.2	35.6	50.8
Females (n= 563)	2.7	4.1	37.3	56.0***
Total (N=1,026)	5.3	4.6	36.6	53.6

Note: Percentages were determined by examining the number of male and female respondents across each response for the statement 'I feel safe most of the time'. To examine gender differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

***p <.001

5.1.2 How often do institutions demonstrate the characteristics of safe institutions and respond to their safety needs?

Children and young people were asked to consider their chosen institution and the extent to which it demonstrates the characteristics that focus group participants believed were vital to enable children and young people to be and feel safe in an institution. Overwhelmingly, children and young people believed their institution of choice demonstrated these characteristics, although there were some differences across institutions.

As presented in Table 5, more than 50 per cent of participants reported that they believed that adults in their nominated environments care about children and young people 'all of the time', with more than 75 per cent of participants reporting adults caring in their church, sport or holiday camp environment, and more than 50 per cent generally feeling that adults care in the school environment. The percentages reported are of those who indicated that characteristics were demonstrated 'all the time'.

It was also observed that a substantial number of participants in the sample believed that children and young people were more likely to rely on their friends than adults for support, particularly at school. This finding was further reinforced in Section 5.3.3, where participants report that they are more likely to turn to a peer or a family member when confronted by an unsafe situation or person.

Participants responding with reference to their school environment reported significantly higher rates of relying on friends, compared with participants responding to survey items relative to their church, sport or holiday environment. Compared with school, sport and holiday environments, participants answering survey items relative to their church setting reported higher rates of adults valuing children's views and opinions, and adults talking with children and young people about things they were worried about. When compared with participants responding with reference to their school, church or holiday setting, those who chose a sport environment reported higher rates of adults caring about children and young people, having at least one adult to talk to and feeling safe most of the time.

Table 5: Percentage of children and young people whose chosen institution demonstrated characteristics of a child safe organisation 'all the time', by institution

Child safe characteristic	Institution				
	School % (n=750)	Church % (n=57)	Sport % (n=216)	Camp % (n=90)	Total % (n=1,113)
Adults care about children and young people	54.7	78.7	81.2***	78.3	62.8
Adults value children's views and opinions	27.0	65.2***	52.8	43.9	35.0
Children and young people have at least one adult they trust	43.0	69.6	76.5***	53.0	51.4
Adults talk with children and young people about things that worry them	35.6	54.4***	28.9	36.3	35.2
Adults know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right	23.8	45.7	45.5	45.7	30.7
Children and young people are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something	55.0***	26.1	38.6	37.0	49.1
Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry	44.6	69.6	66.8	65.4	51.6
I feel safe most of the time	57.2	67.4	78.7***	62.7	53.6

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of respondents per institution who answered 'all of the time' and 'some of the time' to the presented statement. To examine institutional differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

***p <.001

Table 6 presents the percentage of participants who believed their institution 'never' demonstrated the various characteristics of an institution that was safe for children. Twenty-two per cent of young people in their sporting group believed that adults never talked to them about things that worry children and young people, and 10 per cent of young people at school believed that adults did not know them well enough to know if something was not right. Eleven per cent of young people at church did not believe that children and young people had a trusted adult to turn to and 7 per cent of young people did not believe that adults valued children and young people's opinions. Six per cent of participants at church disagreed with the statement that children and young people were more likely to rely on their friends than adults. Otherwise, the percentages of participants who believed that their institution never demonstrated characteristics of a child safe organisation were not significant.

Table 6: Percentage of children and young people who reported that institutions 'never' demonstrate characteristics of a child safe organisation, by institution

Child safe characteristic	Institution			
	School % (n=750)	Church % (n=57)	Sport % (n=216)	Camp % (n=90)
Adults care about children and young people	2.0	2.1	0.0	2.4
Adults value children's views and opinions	4.3	2.2	4.1	7.3***
Children and young people have at least one adult they trust	2.9	10.9***	3.1	3.6
Adults talk with children and young people about things that worry them	6.6	0.0	21.8***	13.8
Adults know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right	10.5***	0.0	5.1	3.8
Children and young people are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something	1.3	6.5***	5.1	3.8
Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry	5.1***	4.4	4.1	4.9
I feel safe most of the time	5.3	6.5***	4.6	6.2

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of respondents per institution who answered 'never' in response to the presented statement. To examine institutional differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.
***p <.001

Table 7 considers the percentage of young people, by age, who believed their institution never demonstrated characteristics of a child safe organisation. Participants aged 14 reported significantly higher rates of adults never valuing children's views and opinions, and never having at least one adult they trusted, compared with participants from other age groups. Participants aged 15 reported significantly higher rates of adults never caring about children and young people, adults never paying attention when a concern was raised, and feeling safe most of the time compared with participants from other age groups. Participants aged 16 and over reported higher rates of relying on their friends rather than adults, compared with participants from younger age groups.

Table 7: Percentage of children and young people who reported that institutions 'never' demonstrate characteristics of a child safe organisation, by age

Child safe characteristic	Age of participant				
	12 years or less % (n=156)	13 years % (n=137)	14 years % (n=152)	15 years % (n=140)	16 years or more % (n=147)
Adults care about children and young people	0.6	2.2	1.3	2.1	1.4
Adults value children's views and opinions	2.6	3.0	5.3*	5.0	4.1
Children and young people have at least one adult they trust	1.3	2.2	5.3*	5.1	3.5
Adults talk with children and young people about things that worry them	9.7	8.2	8.6	10.8	6.2
Adults know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right	3.9	8.2	11.3	11.6	10.2
Children and young people are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something	1.9	0.7	2.0	2.2	4.1**
Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry	2.6	3.7	4.0	8.0**	4.8
I feel safe most of the time	0.7	3.7	4.7	5.8**	5.4

Note: Percentages determined by comparing age to each presented statement. To examine age differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05, **p <.01

As presented in Table 8, females were more likely than males to report that 'Adults care about children and young people' (66.1 compared with 58.6 per cent) and 'Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry' (53.9 per cent compared with 48.8 per cent). On the other hand, males were more likely to report that adults valued their views and opinions (36.5 per cent compared with 33.8 per cent) and they had someone they trusted (52.7 per cent compared with 50.7

per cent). Young women were significantly more likely to feel safe most of the time (55.5 per cent compared with 50.7 per cent).

Table 8: Percentage of participants who reported that institutions demonstrated characteristics of a child safe organisation 'all the time', by gender

Child safe characteristic	Gender		
	Male % (n=467)	Female % (n=567)	Total % (n=1,034)
Adults care about children and young people	58.7	66.1***	62.8
Adults value children's views and opinions	36.5**	33.8	35.0
Children and young people have at least one adult they trust	52.3***	50.7	51.4
Adults talk with children and young people about things that worry them	36.5	34.2	35.2
Adults know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right	32.5	29.2	30.7
Children and young people are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something	45.8	51.9**	49.1
Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry	48.8	53.9**	51.6
I feel safe most of the time	50.8	56.0***	53.6

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who responded 'all of the time' to each presented statement. To examine gender differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

***p* <.01; ****p* <.001

5.1.3 What determines children's sense of safety?

In focus groups, children and young people reported that to be safe and feel safe they needed adults and institutions to both prevent safety concerns and respond to them as they arose. Based on findings from these focus groups, we hypothesised that particular characteristics of institutions would make children and young people feel safer. We expected that having a trusted adult, adults caring about children and valuing their opinions, and adults knowing children well enough to identify when the child's behaviour suggested they were not safe, would influence the extent to which children felt safe (such that participants would report feeling safer when these characteristics were present).

To test this hypothesis, we conducted logistic regression analyses to see how gender, institutional type and characteristics might influence children and young people's perceptions of safety.

As presented in Table 9, findings show that having adults pay attention when children and young people raise concerns or worries was associated with increased perceptions of safety. Contrary to our hypothesis, no other predictors were statistically significant in these analyses.

Table 9: Logistic regression analysis for children and young people's views on sense of safety and institutional characteristics

Characteristics	Feeling safe OR[1] [95% CI[2]]
Female	1.59 [0.50, 5.08]
School	1.19 [0.78, 1.81]
Church	0.07 [0.01, 0.80]
Sporting organisation	2.32 [0.48, 11.14]
Holiday camp	1.23 [0.14, 10.90]
Adults care about children and young people	1.23 [0.63, 2.41]
Adults value children's views and opinions	0.79 [0.40, 1.54]
Children and young people have at least one adult they trust	1.29 [0.76, 2.18]
Adults talk with children and young people about things that worry them	1.39 [0.73, 2.64]
Adults know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right	1.02 [0.56, 1.84]
Children and young people are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something	1.17 [0.68, 2.03]
Adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry	33.33*** [13.77, 80.67]

Note: Sample across all institutions (n=1,010)

****p* <.001[1]

Feeling safe most of the time coded so that never equals 0; all other responses are coded as 1 (0=Never, 1=Yes)

[1] Odds ratios (OR) represents an indicator of association between an exposure (in this case children and young people's views on how child safe institutions were) and an outcome (in this case, perceptions of feeling safe most of the time). The OR represents the odds that a student would feel safe most of the time given the particular exposure, compared to the odds of feeling safe most of the time in the absence of that exposure.

[2] Confidence intervals (CI) represent the range of values within which we can be reasonably sure that the OR effect actually lies.

5.2 What do children and young people consider needs to be done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions?

The second research question investigated the extent to which children and young people perceived current practices in their institutional context were keeping them safe. To answer this question, we asked a sub-question: (a) what would you need if you encountered an unsafe adult or peer?

To answer these questions, participants were presented with two of four scenarios: the first included a young person (either Sally or Michael) who felt uncomfortable with an adult male teacher, and the second included a young person (Mary or Jason) who felt uncomfortable with a male peer. The full text of the scenarios can be found in Appendix 2.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Children and young people said that if they were to encounter an adult or a peer who was acting inappropriately and making them feel uncomfortable, they would mostly need another adult to believe them when they reported their concerns, for another adult to step in and take control, and to know what to do or say if they were in a similar situation.

5.2.1 What young people believe they need

As can be seen in tables 10 and 11, participants believed that if they were to encounter an adult or a peer who was acting inappropriately and making them feel uncomfortable, they would most need another adult to believe them when they reported their concerns, for another adult to step in and take control, and to know what to do or say if they were in a similar situation.

Boys were significantly more likely to report that they had adequate knowledge to deal with the situation, to know whether their teacher's or peer's behaviour was appropriate and what the rules were for such a situation. Girls were more likely to report that they needed an adult to believe them.

Table 10: What children and young people consider should be done to respond to safety issues in institutions, by gender

Need	Gender	
	Males % (n=504)	Females % (n=638)
To know whether [your teacher's / peer's behaviour] was doing was okay	26.6**	18.0
To have another adult I trusted be available to talk	36.7	32.6
For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable	38.9	47.8**
For another adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it	40.7	44.4
For another adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was okay	21.8	23.0
To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation	35.5	38.9
To know what the rules are about situations like this	18.1**	11.9
To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did	8.7	7.1

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of participants who responded 'yes' to each presented statement. To examine gender differences, chi-square analyses were conducted.

% based on 'yes' response

***p* <.01

Scale scoring: 0 = No; 1 = Yes

Table 11 differentiates the scenarios considered. In the first scenario, an adult makes a young person feel uncomfortable, while the second scenario focuses on a child-to-child encounter. As can be seen, there were some differences in what participants believed males and females would need in the scenarios presented. These differences were small but statistically significant. For example, participants were more likely to believe that a female student would need an adult to believe them and to know what they could say in a situation where either an adult or a peer was making them feel uncomfortable. They also believed it would be important for an adult to notice when a male student was made to feel uncomfortable by an adult.

Table 11: What children and young people consider should be done to respond to safety issues in institutions, by scenario

Need	Scenario			
	Scenario 1 (adult-to-child) [b^]		Scenario 2 (child to child) [b^]	
	Male student (Michael) is uncomfortable with adult teacher % (n=350)	Female student (Sally) is uncomfortable with adult teacher % (n=367)	Male student (Jason) is uncomfortable with another young person % (n=344)	Female student (Mary) is uncomfortable with another young person % (n=353)
To know whether what your teacher/peer was doing was okay or not	25.8	28.3***	34.4***	31.6
To have another adult I trusted be available to talk	45.2***	38.7	42.6	42.3
For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable	48.5	50.9***	41.3	47.3***
For another adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it	52.1***	47.7	39.9	38.8
For another adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was okay	24.1	26.7**	24.2	26.5***
To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation	43.6	44.5***	38.8	39.6***
To know what the rules are about situations like this	16.7	18.1**	12.8	17.4***
To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did	8.0	10.4*	9.8	8.3

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of participants who responded 'yes' to each presented statement. To examine differences in responses by scenario, chi-square analyses were conducted.
% based on 'yes' response
*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001
Scale scoring: 0 = No; 1 = Yes

5.3 What children and young people consider is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions

After being presented with the scenario, participants were asked to consider:

- How likely it was that a young person like them might encounter such a situation at school?
- How well they believe their school might prevent or deal with a situation like this?
- Who, if anyone, they would talk to; what they would most need in such a circumstance?
- What might keep them from accessing or receiving assistance?

KEY FINDINGS:

- More than three-quarters of children and young people felt it was unlikely that someone at their school would encounter an adult or other young person who made them feel uncomfortable or acted in a way that made them feel unsafe.
- If they came across someone demonstrating potentially grooming behaviour, females were more likely than males to feel very worried. Both males and females were just as likely to talk to someone about this if it happened to them.
- More than 20 per cent of both boys and girls would not know what to do if faced with a similar encounter.
- Around 45 per cent of all participants believed that adults at their school would only know if a child was unsafe if the child told them.
- Almost 60 per cent said they would turn to a friend, 55 per cent to their mother and 34 per cent to their father if they encountered a situation like the one presented.
- Males were more likely than females to report seeking help from their father, another adult, a teacher, a counsellor or another person, or a telephone helpline, and were also more likely to report not seeking help.
- Young people of both genders were much less likely to seek help from professionals within institutions (including teachers, counsellors and other adults) than from adults and peers outside the institution.

5.3.1 Likelihood of young person encountering the scenario at school

Children and young people were asked to consider how likely it was that they or someone at their school encountered a situation where the behaviours of an adult (as presented in Scenario 1) or a peer (as presented in Scenario 2) made them feel uncomfortable. More females than males rated it unlikely or very unlikely that a child or young person would be in a situation like Scenario 1, but more males than females reported that they would be unlikely, very unlikely or not sure about being worried about such a situation.

More females than males perceived as unlikely or very unlikely a situation where a peer made them feel uncomfortable (as presented in Scenario 2), while more males than females reported this situation as being likely or very likely.

Table 12: How likely children and young people considered Scenario 1 (encountering an uncomfortable adult) and how they would likely respond, for males and females

	Likelihood									
	I'm not sure		Very unlikely		Unlikely		Likely		Very likely	
	Males %	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*
A child or young person at your school would be in a situation like this?	13.3	9.3	31.0	36.6***	33.5	39.0***	13.9	12.8	8.3	2.3
You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this?	7.5***	3.3	4.5***	0.8	8.1***	4.1	27.8***	23.6	52.0	68.3***
You would talk to someone if this happened to you?	7.3	7.0	4.8	2.9	7.1	6.9	28.7	36.1	52.2	47.5

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who responded to each presented statement. To examine gender differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

****p* <.001

Table 13: How likely children and young people considered Scenario 1 (encountering an uncomfortable peer) to be and how they would likely respond, for males and females

	Likelihood of encountering and responding to an uncomfortable peer									
	I'm not sure		Very unlikely		Unlikely		Likely		Very likely	
	Males %	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*
A child or young person at your school would be in a situation like this?	13.9	11.9	26.2	34.7***	33.7	36.7***	17.6***	12.4	8.7***	4.3
You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this?	8.7**	5.4	7.0**	3.7	18.9**	13.7	35.1	42.3**	30.4	34.9**
You would talk to someone if this happened to you?	11.4	6.3	6.9	5.7	15.8	17.0	38.6	43.1	27.2	27.9

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who responded to each presented statement. To examine gender differences in responses to presented statements chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

Males n=504; Females n=638

Findings show that a greater percentage of young men reported that it was 'likely' or 'very likely' a child or young person at their school would experience the circumstances in the first scenario (in which an adult made someone feel uncomfortable) compared with the second scenario (in which a peer made someone feel uncomfortable). Little difference between these scenarios was evident among female participants.

A greater percentage of participants (both male and female) reported that they would feel more worried if they were to encounter an adult who made them feel uncomfortable than a peer. Although they too felt these were unlikely situations, males were more likely to believe that young people would encounter both adults and peers who made them feel uncomfortable, while females were more likely than males to believe they would feel worried in such an encounter.

Both males and females were just as likely to talk to someone about this if it happened to them, and both were more likely to talk to someone about an uncomfortable adult than an uncomfortable peer.

Table 14 demonstrates that a greater percentage of older participants would be unlikely to tell someone if they encountered an unsafe adult or peer, and that across the age groups, participants were less likely to tell if they encountered an unsafe peer.

Table 14: Percentage of participants who reported they would be unlikely to talk someone if they experienced an unsafe adult or peer, by age

Age (years)	Scenario 1 (an adult makes a young person uncomfortable)		Scenario 2 (a peer makes a young person uncomfortable)	
	Likelihood			
	Very unlikely %	Unlikely %	Very unlikely %	Unlikely %
12 years or less	2.6	2.6	2.6	9.8
13	4.4	5.2	4.5	18.7
14	2.7	6.8	6.3	21.5*
15	3.7	9.6	6.8	15.2
16 or older	7.6*	5.5	9.9**	17.0

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number who answered 'unlikely' and 'very unlikely' in response to the presented statement, per age group. To examine age differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05; **p <.01,

5.3.2 How well they believe their school is preventing or dealing with unsafe situations

Participants were asked what would happen if they were in a situation like those described in the scenarios. As demonstrated in Table 15, the majority of participants believed that adults at their school would see it as their job to deal with an unsafe situation, that adults would know what to do and say, and that children and young people would have a trusted adult to talk to.

However, more than one-third of young women reported that they had not talked about what to do if they encountered an unsafe adult or peer and would not know what to do. Almost 50 per cent of

participants believed that adults at their school would only know if a child or young person was unsafe if they were told.

Table 15: What participants believe is already being done to respond to safety issues and risks in institutions, for males and females

	Level of agreement											
	I'm not sure		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	Males %	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*
I would know what to do because we've talked about it in class[(a)]	9.7***	4.2	8.2	10.5***	11.5	26.4***	25.9	28.8***	27.1	22.5	17.7***	7.7
Adults at my school would notice if another adult was doing the wrong thing[(a)]	12.0**	9.7	3.8	3.0	10.1	14.7**	22.1	29.0**	35.0	33.1	17.1**	10.5
Adults at my school would only know if a child or young person was unsafe if they told them[(a)]	9.6	7.3	1.9	1.6	14.3	12.5	28.6	30.4	31.9	33.9	13.8	14.3
I have an adult at my school I trust that I would talk to[(a)]	7.8*	3.9	6.2*	5.3	10.9*	9.7	21.3*	17.6	27.3	33.8*	26.5	29.8*
Adults at my school would probably not believe me[(a)]	9.9	9.6	21.7	22.7	27.1	34.5	24.0	18.6	11.3	11.0	6.1	3.7
Adults at my school would see it as their job to do something about a situation like this[(a)]	8.9	5.8	2.6	1.0	5.8	4.0	15.4	15.7	37.9	41.7	29.4	31.8

	Level of agreement											
	I'm not sure		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	Males %	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*	*Males %*	*Females %*
Adults at my school would know what to say to me if I told them I was unsafe[(a)]	**9.0**	**8.3**	**3.1**	**1.2**	**3.6**	**4.9**	**22.0**	**22.0**	**39.1**	**38.6**	**23.2**	**25.1**
Adults at my school would know what to do if I told them I was unsafe[(a)]	9.2*	4.7	3.1*	1.0	3.1*	2.6	16.6	19.3*	40.1	42.3*	27.7	30.1*
Adults at my school would ask me what I would like to happen, instead of dealing with it without me[(a)]	15.4	10.3	4.3	3.8	6.4	7.7	27.2	24.8	30.0	34.9	16.8	18.6

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who responded to each presented statement. To examine gender differences in responses, chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

Males n=504; Females n=638

5.3.3 Who would young people seek help from?

Children and young people were asked who they might turn to if they were confronted by a scenario where an adult or another young person was demonstrating grooming-like behaviours, or behaviours that made them feel uncomfortable.

Percentages for children and young people's preferences for help-seeking are presented in Table 16. Of the whole sample, almost 60 per cent said they would turn to a friend, 55 per cent to their mother and 34 per cent to their father if they encountered a situation like the one presented.

Findings show males were more likely than females to report seeking help from their father or a counsellor, and were also more likely than females to report not seeking help. Both males and females were much less likely to seek help from professionals, including teachers and counsellors, or from a telephone helpline.

Females were less likely than males to seek help from each of the adults identified.

Table 16: Sources of support young people would turn to if they were unsafe, across gender

Support sought from	Gender		
	Males % (n=504)	Females % (n=638)	Total
A friend	58.7	59.6	59.2
My mum	55.4	53.9	54.5
My dad	47.4***	23.3	33.7
My sister or brother	22.4	20.2	21.1
Another adult	15.0	11.0	12.7
A teacher	28.9	24.3	26.4
A counsellor	17.4**	11.5	14.0
Someone on a telephone helpline (like Lifeline or Kids Helpline)	7.6	5.6	6.5
Someone else?	9.1*	5.4	7.0
I wouldn't tell anyone	8.7**	4.6	6.4

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who responded 'yes' to using each help source. To examine gender differences in responses to use of help sources, chi-square analyses were conducted.
*p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

5.3.4 The barriers that prevent participants from accessing or receiving assistance

Children and young people were asked to consider what would prevent them from seeking help in institutions. As presented in Table 17, more than 40 per cent of males and females agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at school. Twenty per cent of males and 30 per cent of females felt they would be worried that if they told things would get worse. More than a quarter of males and almost one-fifth of females said they would deal with the situation alone.

Table 17: Percentage of children and young people who strongly agreed that identified barriers would keep them from seeking help in institutions, across gender

Barrier	Gender			
	Males % (n=419)		Females % (n=484)	
	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at school about things like this[(a)]	27.7	17.7	29.1	17.4
Adults at my school don't really care about young people in situations like this so I wouldn't ask[(a)]	9.8	5.0**	5.8	1.9
Adults at my school are too busy to deal with things like this[(a)]	10.3	4.5*	7.2	2.9
I would be worried that things would get worse if I told an adult at my school[(a)]	14.9	6.5	21.6	9.3**
Adults at my school wouldn't know what to do in situations like this[(a)]	9.3	5.5	9.5	2.3
I would deal with this type of thing by myself[(a)]	17.3	10.1*	13.5	5.8

Note: Percentages determined through calculating the number of male and female participants who responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' to each presented statement. To examine gender differences in responses to presented statements, chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

5.3.5 Young people's views on the adequacy of schools' responses

Tables 18 and 19 detail whether children and young people consider their school is doing enough to respond to safety issues and risks. As can be observed, more than a half of all males and females believed their school was doing enough to respond to safety issues, and on average, less than 5 per cent believed their school was doing nothing.

Females were statistically more likely than males to report their school as doing enough to keep children and young people safe.

Table 18: Percentages for the extent to which children and young people consider their school is preventing safety issues and risks in institutions, by gender

Extent of Prevention	Gender		
	Males % (n=463)	Females % (n=563)	Total
I think my school is doing:			
Enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	50.8	56.0***	53.6
Some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	35.6	37.3	36.6
Nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	5.2	4.1	4.6
I'm not sure	8.4	2.7	5.3

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of male and female participants who answered each option in the question presented. To examine gender differences in responses, chi-square analyses were conducted.

****p* <.001

Table 19 explores differences in views across age groups and shows that children aged 12 and younger were statistically more likely to report their school as doing enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe. By comparison, participants aged 14 were statistically more likely to report feeling their school was doing some things, but not enough. Older participants (aged 16 and above) were statistically more likely to report their school as doing nothing to prevent young people from being unsafe.

Table 19: The extent to which children and young people considered their school was preventing safety issues and risks in institutions, across ages

Extent of prevention	Age (years)				
	12 and under % (n=152)	13 % (n=140)	14 % (n=147)	15 % (n=156)	16 and over % (n=137)
I think my school is doing:					
Enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	26.6*	16.3	17.7	17.7	21.7
Some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	19.6	20.9	22.2*	20.9	16.5
Nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe	2.4	22.0	24.4	24.4	26.8*
I'm not sure	16.5	24.1	26.6	16.7	16.5

Note: Percentages determined by calculating the number of participants who answered each response option across age groups. To examine age differences in responses to responses options, chi-square analyses were conducted.

*p <.05

6. Discussion of findings from ASK-YP Survey

6.1 Children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions

Children and young people who participated in the ASK-YP Survey overwhelmingly reported that they felt safe for the majority of time in schools, church groups, sporting activities and holiday camps, with less than 10 per cent of young people reporting that they never felt safe.

This finding is not dissimilar to previous studies conducted elsewhere that have found that most children and young people felt safe in school (Eisenbraun, 2007; Theriot & Orme, 2014) and other youth activities, although this sense of safety was often compromised when they encountered bullying, harassment and other school-based violence (Noaks & Noaks, 2000).

A sense of safety within institutions was generally considered positive: children and young people who feel safe do better educationally, their participation in activities is higher and their mental health and wellbeing are more positive (Biag, 2014; Grover, 2015; Van Voorhees et al., 2008). However, as children and young people identified in focus groups for this project, feeling safe when risks were present can have negative consequences. For example, they believed that children who felt safe may be less attuned to potentially risky adults, peers or situations and be less vigilant in keeping themselves safe.

6.1.1 Children and young people's assessment of the extent to which institutions reflect characteristics of an organisation that is safe for children

As noted in the introduction, we expected that particular institutional characteristics would be associated with greater perceptions of safety. These included having a trusted adult; adults caring about children and valuing their opinions; and adults knowing children well enough to identify when the child's behaviour suggested they were not safe.

As presented, we found that having adults pay attention when children and young people raised concerns or worries was a statistically significant predictor of children and young people's sense of safety. Other institutional characteristics were not strongly associated. This finding highlights the critical importance of adult responses to children and young people's concerns, and this should be emphasised in the recommendations on how institutions can respond.

However, it is worth reiterating that although there were limited statistical associations in the survey results, the importance of institutions demonstrating that they were responsive to children's safety needs emerged strongly in the focus groups. Focus group participants believed that if adults did not demonstrate that they cared about children and young people, individuals encountering unsafe adults, peers or situations were less likely to seek support, believing it would do little to rectify the situation. Similarly, participants in focus groups voiced their frustration in adults who downplayed their concerns, disbelieved them or failed to act on them. They believed that adults who reacted this way were unreliable.

Across the institutions, children and young people generally believed that their schools, sports groups, churches and holiday camps demonstrated the characteristics of a child safe organisation as identified in focus groups. However, a number of findings suggest that improvements may be warranted. For example, sporting groups may consider responding to the one-fifth of participants who felt that adults never talk to children about things that are worrying them; and schools may respond to the 10 per cent of participants who did not agree that adults at their school knew children and young people well enough to know that something wasn't right.

6.1.2 Age

One of the key aims of this study was to determine children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutional contexts, and to consider the ways that these changed depending on participants' age. For example, it was hypothesised, based on the focus group findings, that participants of different ages would have different perceptions of the extent to which institutions reflected child safe characteristics, with younger participants reporting that their institutions were more likely to demonstrate the desired characteristics.

In relation to their age, participants who were aged 12 and under were more likely than older children to believe that adults in the institution of their choice cared about children and young people, valued their opinions and talked to them about their worries. They were also more likely than their older peers to believe that children and young people had an adult they trusted. Children of this age were most likely to feel safe 'all of the time'.

In comparison, 15-year-olds were less likely to report that adults in their institutions demonstrated the characteristics under investigation. For example, around one in 10 15-year-olds believed that adults never talked with children and young people about things that worried them; nor did they know them well enough to know if something wasn't right. However, less than 6 per cent of 15-year-olds felt they were never safe, while 42 per cent reported feeling safe all the time. While a larger percentage of children aged 12 and under said they felt safe 'all of the time' (66 per cent), compared with older children aged 16 and above (52 per cent), the differences were not statistically significant.

The finding that older participants were more likely to have less confidence in adults and are more likely to assess their safety as being low is consistent with other studies. This suggests that older young people are more likely to have experienced unsafe situations (such as violence, harassment, bullying) and unhelpful responses from adults and institutions, and are more likely to be cynical about adults and their capacity to deal with youth problems (Hong & Eamon, 2012). These studies suggest that adults and institutions must spend time with older adolescents to improve their confidence, particularly if they want to encourage young people to seek assistance from adults in times of need (Biag, 2014; Wang et al., 2014).

It may also be that older participants are not simply more cynical but less naïve and more 'streetwise' to some of the perils of making a complaint. Nevertheless, both issues make it important that institutions build relationships with older adolescents and build confidence in mechanisms responding to concerns.

6.1.3 Gender

It was hypothesised that young people's perceptions of institutions would vary based on gender.

Gender differences were evident in some areas of the analysis. Some of these differences may relate to gender socialisation – such as females reporting more adults caring about children and young people – but, at the same time, females also reported more children and young people relying on their peers or friends to raise worries or concerns. Males were more likely to believe that children and young people had at least one adult they trusted. The variation in these gender differences in the analysis was not uniform and may indicate socialisation factors associated with gender roles; for example, females being more attuned to roles of care, and males being more aligned to self-reliance, and hence, more likely to rely on individuals rather than collectives for support. It would seem important for those developing child safe policies, practices and programs to be aware of these factors when developing their approaches.

6.2 Children and young people's sense of what they would do and what would be done when they encountered an unsafe situation

This study aimed to determine what participants believed institutions were doing well; what children believed adults and institutions would do; and what was needed to keep children safe from abuse, and to respond when they were unsafe.

Based on focus group findings, we hypothesised that participants would report a greater likelihood of uncomfortable adult-to-student interactions compared with child-to-child interactions in a young person's school environment. We also expected that participants' gender would result in differences in perceptions of school-based approaches to preventing and responding to these interactions. Lastly, we hypothesised that participants' gender would influence who they sought help from; more females were also expected to seek help compared with males. This was based on the findings of previous studies and from focus groups.

6.2.1 Help-seeking

One of the key findings of this study was that children and young people were much more likely to seek help from a peer or a parent than from someone at school, even though when asked what they would need, a majority of participants felt they would need another adult to notice, to ask if they were okay, and to step in.

Although previous studies have reported lower levels of confidence in adults at schools caring about students and responding to their needs, similar trends to seeking help outside schools were found (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Developmental theory has been used to explain the reluctance of students to seek help as a reflection of an adolescent developmental trend to more independent and autonomous functioning (Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001). However, this does not explain our sample's willingness to seek support from their parents.

Recognising children and young people's preference to disclose unsafe situations to parents and friends, institutions should consider ways to better engage with parents and peers to identify risks and develop strategies to assist children and young people when they are unsafe. Few studies have considered the ways that parents respond to their children's concerns about sexual safety. However, those that have considered parents' responses argued for programs to help build parents' confidence, particularly when dealing with adolescent children (Hershkowitz, Lanes, & Lamb, 2007). They also recommended providing support for both the parent and child to help them deal with the psychological effects of abuse and disclosure (Elliot & Carnes, 2001). Similarly, studies might consider what adolescents need to best support their peers when safety concerns are revealed.

6.2.2 Adult-to-child versus child-to-child interactions

As predicted, there was variation in the way participants responded to a scenario where an adult was acting inappropriately and to one where it was another young person. Young women, in particular, believed it was more likely for a child or young person to encounter an unsafe adult, and would be less likely to talk to someone if it happened to them. Young men were considerably more likely to feel worried in a situation where a peer was acting inappropriately rather than an adult, but they were slightly more likely to tell.

Young men and women both reported that instead of seeking support they would deal with the situation themselves, particularly when it was a male peer making a male individual feel uncomfortable. This may be problematic as participants recognised that they were often ill-equipped to respond.

6.2.3 Gender

Our results found gender differences in the responses to the scenarios.

Males were significantly more likely to believe that a young person could get into a situation where the actions of an adult rather than a peer made them uncomfortable (although both genders felt the likelihood of these scenarios occurring was very low). However, females were more likely than males to report feeling worried if they encountered an unsafe adult or a peer acting inappropriately.

Females were significantly more likely to report having an adult at their school that they trusted and who they could talk to, and reported that adults at their school would know what to do if they told them they were unsafe. However, in contradiction, girls were also significantly more likely to be worried that things would get worse if they told an adult at their school. On the other hand, males were significantly more likely to report that they would know what to do because they had talked about it in class.

There were some differences in the people that participants would turn to, based on gender. Males were significantly more likely than females to turn to their fathers, to a telephone helpline, to someone else or to not tell anyone.

These findings are somewhat different to previous studies, which have suggested that young men often do not disclose instances of child sexual abuse, worrying about the implications for their own masculinity and their ability to deal with issues themselves (Kia-Keating, Grossman, Sorsoli, & Epstein, 2005).

6.3 Institutional responses

Finally, the study attempted to gauge whether children and young people believed their schools were doing enough to prevent situations where students encountered an unsafe adult or peer who was demonstrating grooming-like behaviours. We expected that females would be more likely than males to perceive their school as preventing and responding to the uncomfortable adult-to-student and peer-to-peer interactions.

As hypothesised, females were statistically more likely than males to report they thought that their school was doing enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe. On the other hand, males were statistically more likely than females to believe their school was doing nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe or being unsure.

As noted in the discussion above, most participants aged under 12 believed their school was doing enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe, while those aged 13 and above gradually became more and more likely to believe their school was doing nothing. Those aged 16 and over were statistically more likely to believe that their schools were doing nothing.

This finding is of concern in that a student's assessment of their school's capacity to keep them safe is inversely related to their sense of belonging, participation and security at school (Thapa et al., 2013).

7. Implications arising from the ASK-YP Survey

Stage Three of this study found that children and young people felt safe most of the time in schools, holiday camps, church and youth groups, and sports teams. Most children and young people in this sample have a trusted adult they can turn to when they feel unsafe. However, a group of respondents reported that they never felt safe. This suggests that institutions that work with children and young people need to find ways to identify those who have such feelings, and develop strategies to increase their confidence in adults. Organisations might start by targeting older young people in such discussions.

KEY FINDINGS: What do young people believe needs to be done?

- Institutions that work with children and young people need to find ways to identify those who don't feel safe and develop strategies to increase their confidence in adults.
- A concerted effort is needed to assist teachers and other 'caring adults' to build children and young people's confidence in adults, and adults' ability to respond to issues.
- There is a need to reconsider the nature and scope of education and information provided to children and young people about abuse and dealing with unsafe adults and peers – and it must be informed by the needs of young people of different ages and genders. It may be provided at school but also complemented by delivery from other trusted adults who children and young people turn to. It should be informed by young people themselves, to ensure it meets their needs and promotes strategies that young people believe they would use in situations when they were unsafe.
- Institutions need to consider better ways to make their staff more accessible to children and young people. In addition, strategies are needed to increase young people's confidence in adults noticing they are unsafe, respecting their concerns and acting on them.
- Identification and problem-solving should occur not just when a young person discloses their concerns, but at an earlier stage and in more proactive ways.
- Peer support should be recognised and programs might focus on linking peers up with trusted adults who can help them find solutions together.

7.1 Understanding and adequately assessing risk

The findings indicate that to feel safe in institutions, children and young people need to believe that adults pay attention when they raise their concerns or worries. Although the majority of young people stated that adults would notice, one in 10 either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would. Almost half believed that adults would only know if a child was unsafe if the child told them. This finding reflects the results of studies with teachers who report little confidence in their capacity to identify grooming behaviours, or to accurately recognise when a child was unsafe (Kenny, 2004). A concerted effort to help teachers and other 'caring adults' to build children and young people's confidence in adults, and adults' ability to respond to issues, would be of worth.

The study also found that the number of participants who believed that a student at their school would encounter an unsafe adult or peer was very low. This finding is noteworthy when it is compared to the actual prevalence of abuse found in previous studies. In studies conducted overseas, 5–8 per cent of participants reported they had experienced adult-to-child sexual abuse at school (Chen & Wei, 2011; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006), while 23–87 per cent of young people reported that they had experienced peer sexual victimisation (Clear et al., 2014). Although we cannot assume that similar rates of abuse occur in Australia, the under-assessment of abuse may point to a level of naiveté among our sample, which may be due to reluctance to report, and/or lack of clarity of what constitutes abusive behaviour. This does present a challenge. On one hand, increasing children and young people's awareness of the

risk of child sexual abuse and peer sexual victimisation may help them better assess risk. However, if the wrong type of information is presented and the risks are overstated, children and young people's level of anxiety and trust in adults may be compromised. Research into the most appropriate, adequate and accessible form of information and education seems necessary. Future research could test the impact of protective behaviour education and participative strategies that promote safety and the opportunity for children and young people to voice their concerns both informally and formally.

These findings would imply that there is a need to reconsider the nature and scope of education and information provided to high school students to respond to their most pressing concerns. This education and information may be provided at school (which may, in turn, increase students' confidence that adults understand and take safety issues seriously). In addition, it could be complemented with information and education delivered by other trusted adults children and young people turn to, including parents. We would argue that such education should be informed by young people themselves, to ensure that it meets their needs and promotes strategies they believe they would use in situations when they were unsafe.

Such strategies to improve knowledge and risk assessment skills must take into account the different needs and gaps in knowledge of children and young people of different ages and genders. For example, older young people (and males) may need more opportunities to discussion their concerns with adults (Williams & Cornell, 2006), while females' fears about the repercussions of reporting their concerns might be better understood and resolved (Kogan, 2004).

7.2 Responding to risks and compromised safety

The quantitative stage of this study confirmed findings from focus groups in relation to what children and young people feel they need when they encounter unsafe situations, namely: for adults to notice that they are unsafe and step in to take action; for adults to be available; and for adults to believe them when they say they feel uncomfortable. Young women in particular felt that it was important to know whether what their teacher (or peer) was doing was appropriate and how they might manage the situation themselves. They reported, however, that they did not always feel that they had developed this knowledge and skill in class.

Survey respondents also confirmed findings from the focus groups that young people often feel uncomfortable talking to adults in institutions about issues related to safety. The findings suggest that institutions need to consider better ways of making their staff more accessible to children and young people and more confident and child-responsive in the way that they relate to them. In addition, strategies are needed to increase young people's confidence that adults will notice when they are unsafe, respect their concerns and act on them.

7.3 Creating child safe cultures

Previous studies have suggested that students' confidence in seeking support is enhanced significantly if schools promote a supportive climate that demonstrates a commitment to young people's safety and an intolerance of behaviours that place them at-risk (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010; Klein et al., 2012). When schools have clearly defined policies and students have confidence in them, the incidence of peer sexual violence has shown to reduce and help-seeking increase (Attar-Schwartz, 2009; Khoury-Kassabri, 2011).

This study pointed to the fact that although most children and young people believed their institution was safe, some were ambivalent about whether their institution met their safety needs, and satisfactorily identified, prevented and dealt with their safety concerns. Older participants in particular

assessed elements of their institutions' cultures as being less than optimal, and highlighted areas they perceived to be in need of improvement.

7.4 Participation in identifying and responding to concerns

Participants in focus groups reported that schools might better engage with children and young people in identifying both risks and solutions to the issues they encounter. The findings from the survey support this notion. Specifically, findings suggest that this identification and problem solving should not only occur at the point at which a young person discloses their concerns, but also earlier and in more proactive ways. Participants in focus groups suggested that schools conduct school-wide surveys and provide regular forums in which teachers directly ask young people about any risks they perceive, as well as any strategies they would recommend.

Finally, the results suggest children and young people frequently turn to their peers for support when they encounter unsafe situations. Focus group participants felt that institutions (particularly schools) might better use peer support programs and equip young people to better assist their peers. In light of many young people's self-reported limited knowledge about what to do in unsafe situations, an element of such peer support programs should focus on linking peers up with trusted and well-equipped adults who can help them find solutions.

7.5 Future research

This study attempted to gauge children and young people's perceptions of the likelihood of risk; the nature and adequacy of institutions' responses to risk; and the support they would need if they encountered an unsafe adult or peer. It did not attempt to capture the extent and nature of adult-to-child or child-to-child sexual abuse – data that would be invaluable in helping organisations understand and respond to the reality of child sexual abuse in institutions.

As noted, previous studies have suggested that teachers often do not feel adequately informed or skilled to prevent, identify or respond to child sexual abuse. Recognising that many young people will turn to their parents or peers, similar research that gauges the level of confidence and skills of parents and others, as well as the best ways to improve their assessment skills, may be of benefit.

8. Limitations from the ASK-YP Survey

The findings of this study are cross-sectional in nature, and cannot be interpreted as indicating causality, in that cross-sectional surveys are unable to infer the direction of the effect. The findings need to be interpreted with consideration given to the low rates of participation relative to the size of the invited sample, and a large variation in participating students from each school. This study employed a convenience sampling approach to recruit children and young people. The approach was intentionally broad and inclusive, with the aim of recruiting as widely as possible to ensure high levels of participation. The recruited sample was smaller than anticipated and is not a national representative sample.

A large number of schools across four states and territories were invited, on multiple occasions, to participate in the survey. The absolute majority of schools declined the invitation, either because they reported being inundated by research requests; believed the study was potentially harmful to students; believed that children and young people may not be competent to complete the study; or because they were unable to allocate staff resources to administer the survey during school hours. This resulted in a small number of schools agreeing to support students to complete the survey.

Schools that did agree to participate generally did not recruit a large number of participants. According to these schools, this was due in part to the cumbersome paper-based parental consent process, and to parents' concerns about the impact that completing a survey on safety might have on children and young people, leading to low rates of parental consent. A number of schools suggested that the number of students who declined to participate after receiving parental consent was small but did exist.

The self-report measurement tools used were developed for this study, and were informed by the findings of the focus group stage. Future research needs to build on these findings by testing and validating the tools developed and trialled in this project – particularly the indicators of safety.

The ethical considerations of this study did not allow for children to be specifically asked about child sexual abuse. Nevertheless, general issues such as behaviour described in the scenarios can be associated with grooming behaviours consistent in many child sexual abuse cases. More general measures of safety and feeling uncomfortable were the focus, rather than children and young people's perceptions of safety within institutions. It cannot be assumed that young people were directly referencing sexually abusive behaviour or were cognisance of child sexual abuse in their responses. Therefore, findings relevant to the Royal Commission were made on the basis of reasonable inferences about how institutions can better respond to child sexual abuse.

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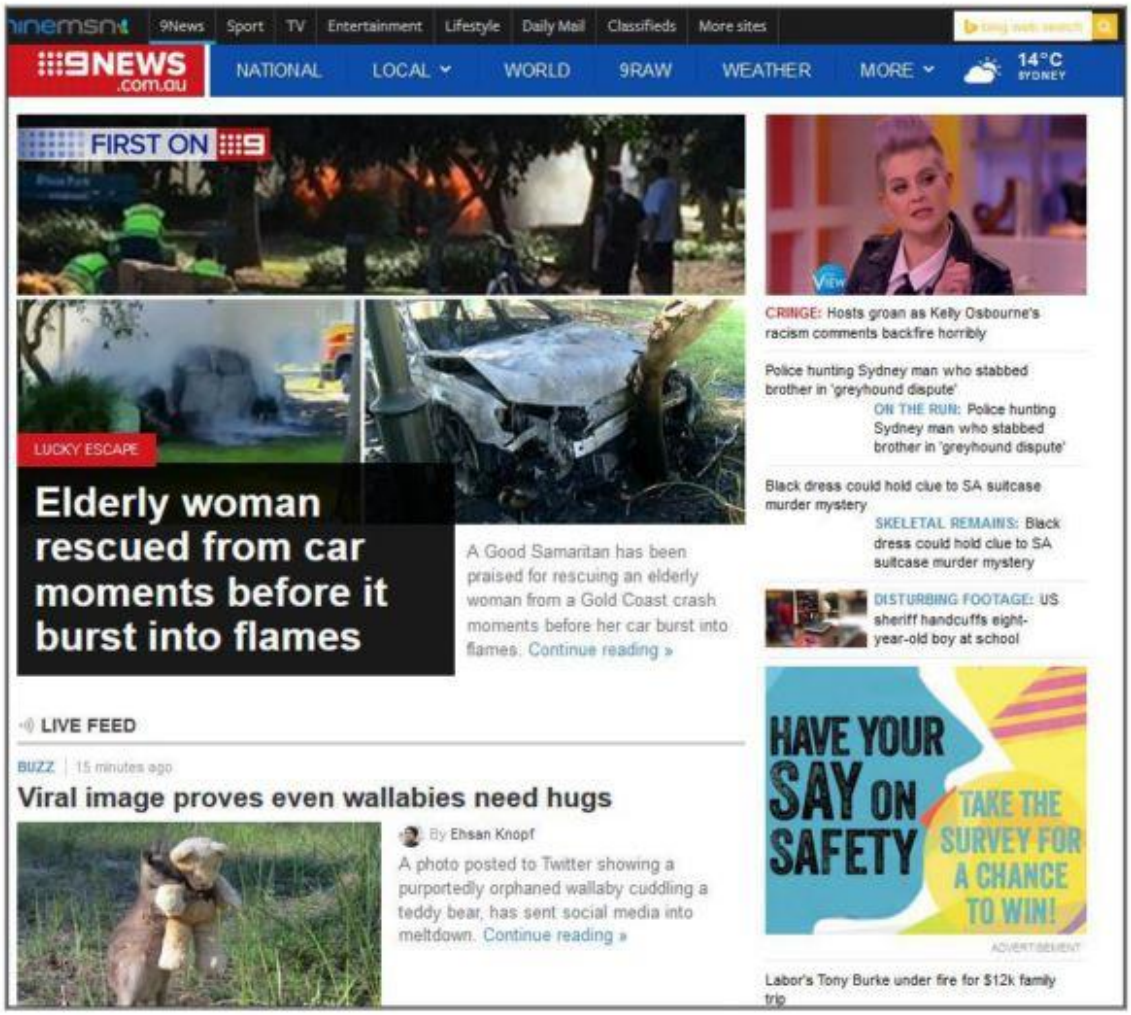
Appendices

Appendix 1: Example of electronic marketing



Appendix 2: ASK-YP Survey

Welcome to the Australian Safe Kids Survey. Would you like to participate in the study, realising that you can stop at any time and skip any questions that you don't want to answer, and that your answers are confidential: no-one will know how you responded. To say thanks you'll go in the running to win vouchers worth $150.

- ❍ Yes, I agree
- ❍ No, I don't want to be involved

How old are you?

Are you:

- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Other

What is your postcode at home? [You can leave this blank if you're not sure]

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? If you are both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in origin, mark both responses. Yes Aboriginal, and Yes Torres Strait Islander.

- ❑ Yes, I'm Aboriginal
- ❑ Yes, I'm Torres Strait Islander
- ❑ No

Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Were you involved in a focus group for this project?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Unsure

Were you given a code to use when filling out this survey?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Unsure

What was the code? (It is 6 characters long: 3 letters and 3 numbers)

We would like you to think about a place you have been to, or an activity you have done, in the last 6 months. In the next section we will ask you to tell us how well you think they are doing in keeping children and young people safe. You don't need to choose the place where you are right now – it's up to you!

- Holiday camps
- Your church or church youth group
- Your sports team or recreational group
- Your school

How true are the following statements for your school? (All of the time, Some of the time, Never, I'm not sure)

1. Adults at my school care about children and young people
2. Adults at my school value children's views and opinions
3. Children and young people have at least one adult at my school who they trust
4. At my school adults talk with children and young people about things that worry children and young people
5. Adults at my school know children and young people well enough to know if something isn't right
6. Children and young people at my school are more likely to rely on their friends than adults if they are worried about something
7. At my school adults pay attention when children and young people raise a concern or worry
8. I feel safe most of the time that I'm at school

The Royal Commission is interested in learning from children about what they need to feel safe and what things adults should do when they feel unsafe. We spoke to some children and young people who said that sometimes they worried about creepy adults who made them feel uncomfortable, about adults who might do things that hurt them or pressured them into doing things they didn't like and about other children and young people who harassed them and made them feel uncomfortable, who might do things that hurt or pressure them into doing things they didn't like. Now we're going to tell you about two made-up young people who are having a bad time. We'd like you to think about them and answer some questions about what they need and what should happen to help them. You can read the scenario and also watch it as a video.

SCENARIO 1

- Sally is in the school play and rehearses after school. Her teacher tells her that she is very talented and seems really encouraging. But Sally sometimes feels a bit uncomfortable with her teacher; he always singles Sally out for special attention and encouragement. He's a nice guy and everyone likes him. But Sally is uncomfortable because sometimes her teacher stands really close to her and compliments her in ways that makes her feel weird. Sally's teacher has started arranging one-on-one rehearsals with Sally where Sally has to practice the romantic scenes with him, saying things like "I love you". Sally's teacher says these rehearsals are important to be ready for the performance.
- Michael is in the school play and rehearses after school. His teacher tells him that he is very talented and seems really encouraging. But Michael sometimes feels a bit uncomfortable with his teacher; he always singles Michael out for

special attention and encouragement. He's a nice guy and everyone likes him. But Michael is uncomfortable because sometimes his teacher stands really close to him and compliments him in ways that make him feel weird. Michael's teacher has started arranging one-on-one rehearsals with Michael where Michael has to practice the romantic scenes with him, saying things like "I love you". Michael's teacher says these rehearsals are important to be ready for the performance.

How likely is it that: Very likely, Likely, Unlikely, Very unlikely, I'm not sure

A child or young person at your school would be in a situation like this?
You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this
You would talk to someone if this happened to you

If you were in a situation like this and were going to tell someone, who would it most likely be?

- ❑ A friend
- ❑ My Mum
- ❑ My Dad
- ❑ My sister or brother
- ❑ Another adult
- ❑ A teacher
- ❑ A counsellor
- ❑ Someone on a telephone helpline (Like Lifeline or Kids Helpline)
- ❑ Someone else?
- ❑ I wouldn't tell anyone

If you were in a situation like this, what do you think you would need most? You can choose up to 3.

- ❑ To know whether what your teacher was doing was OK or not
- ❑ To have another adult I trusted be available to talk
- ❑ For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable
- ❑ For another adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it
- ❑ For another adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was OK
- ❑ To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation
- ❑ To know what the rules are about situations like this
- ❑ To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did

Based on the scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements, for your school?

I would know what to do because we've talked about it in class
Adults at my school would notice if another adult was doing the wrong thing
Adults at my school would only know if a child or young person was unsafe if they told them
I have an adult at my school I trust that I would talk to
Adults at my school would probably not believe me
Adults at my school would see it as their job to do something about a situation like this
Adults at my school would know what to say to me if I told them I was unsafe
Adults at my school would know what to do if I told them I was unsafe
Adults at my school would ask me what I would like to have happen, instead of dealing with it without me

If you were in a situation like this, there might be a number of things that kept you from getting help. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

I would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at school about things like this
Adults at my school don't really care about young people in situations like this so I wouldn't ask
Adults at my school are too busy to deal with things like this
I would be worried that things would get worse if I told an adult at my school
Adults at my school wouldn't know what to do in situations like this
I would deal with this type of thing by myself
I don't feel confident that adults at my school would fix a situation like this

SCENARIO 2 Children and young people in our study told us that sometimes they felt uncomfortable when they were with their peers. They told us about bullies, about older young people who intimidated or harassed them, who made them feel uncomfortable, who did things that hurt them or pressured them into doing things they didn't like. In the next scenario, a young person is in a situation where they are not sure about the actions of a peer. We'd like you to think about them and answer some questions about what they need and what should happen to help them.

SCENARIO 2

- Jason isn't a good swimmer and he is worried because he is going on a beach camp later in the year. His mother has organised for him to get some extra swimming lessons from Dan who goes to Jason's school and is the captain of the swimming team. Everyone loves Dan because he's a nice guy and he's won lots of competitions. Jason likes Dan too but sometimes feels uncomfortable when Dan is in the water with him. He stands just a little bit too close and insists

that he hold Jason up when he's practicing his kicking. Last week Jason told Dan that he doesn't need to be held anymore. But Dan said, "come on, trust me, I know what I'm doing; unless you want everyone at camp to laugh at you because you can't swim you need to do it my way." Jason still doesn't feel OK.

- Mary isn't a good swimmer and she is worried because she is going on a beach camp later in the year. Her PE teacher has organised for her to get some extra swimming lessons from Dan who goes to Mary's school and is the captain of the swimming team. Everyone loves Dan because he's a nice guy and he's won lots of competitions. Mary likes Dan too but sometimes feels uncomfortable when Dan is in the water with her. He stands just a little bit too close and insists that he hold Mary up when she's practicing her kicking. Last week Mary told Dan that she doesn't need to be held anymore. But Dan said, "come on, trust me, I know what I'm doing; unless you want everyone at camp to laugh at you because you can't swim you need to do it my way". Mary still doesn't feel OK.

How likely is it that: Very likely, Likely, Unlikely, Very unlikely, I'm not sure

A child or young person at your school would be in a situation like this?
You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this
You would talk to someone if this happened to you

If you were in a situation like this and were going to tell someone, who would it most likely be?

- ❑ A friend
- ❑ My Mum
- ❑ My Dad
- ❑ My sister or brother
- ❑ Another adult
- ❑ A teacher
- ❑ A counsellor
- ❑ Someone on a telephone helpline (Like Lifeline or Kids Helpline)
- ❑ Someone else?
- ❑ I wouldn't tell anyone

If you were in a situation like this, what do you think you would need most? You can choose up to 3.

- ❑ To know whether what the guy was doing was OK or not
- ❑ To have an adult I trusted be available to talk
- ❑ For an adult to believe me when I said I felt uncomfortable
- ❑ For an adult to notice that I might be unsafe and to step in and stop it
- ❑ For an adult to notice that I was uncomfortable and to ask if I was OK
- ❑ To know what I could do or say so that I could get out of this situation
- ❑ To know what the rules are about situations like this
- ❑ To make sure that no one else knows because things would be bad if they did

Based on the scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements, for your school? Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, I'm not sure

I would know what to do because we've talked about it in class
Adults at my school would notice if a young person was doing the wrong thing
Adults at my school would only know if a child or young person was unsafe if they told them
I have an adult at my school I trust that I would talk to
Adults at my school would probably not believe me
Adults at my school would see it as their job to do something about a situation like this
Adults at my school would know what to say to me if I told them I was unsafe
Adults at my school would know what to do if I told them I was unsafe
Adults at my school would ask me what I would like to have happen, instead of dealing with it without me

If you were in a situation like this, there might be a number of things that kept you from getting help. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree, I'm not sure

I would feel uncomfortable talking to an adult at school about things like this
Adults at my school don't really care about young people in situations like this so I wouldn't ask
Adults at my school are too busy to deal with things like this
I would be worried that things would get worse if I told an adult at my school
Adults at my school wouldn't know what to do in situations like this
I would deal with this type of thing by myself
I don't feel confident that adults at my school would fix a situation like this

Finish this sentence: "I think my school is doing...

- ❍ enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe
- ❍ some things but not enough to prevent children and young people from being unsafe
- ❍ nothing to prevent children and young people from being unsafe
- ❍ not sure

Thanks for answering those questions! How are you feeling? On a scale of one to five, how are you feeling? 1 is bad, 5 is great!

- ❍ 1
- ❍ 2
- ❍ 3
- ❍ 4
- ❍ 5

Sometimes when people are asked about their personal safety they might think about past experiences or feel uncomfortable or distressed. If this happens to you: it's OK to let someone know. If you're at school, you might think about talking to a teacher or a counsellor or someone who you trust about how you're feeling. We've let your school know that sometimes young people might feel uncomfortable and have given them a list of things that they could do to help. All you need to do is let your teacher know that you'd like to talk. Alternatively, if you would like someone to talk with you outside of school, you can contact Kids Helpline 24/7 on 1800 55 1800 FREE or go to kidshelp.com.au for online counselling. Kids Helpline is Australia's only telephone and online counselling service specifically for those aged 5 to 25 years.