

To what extent can

Keeping Ourselves Safe

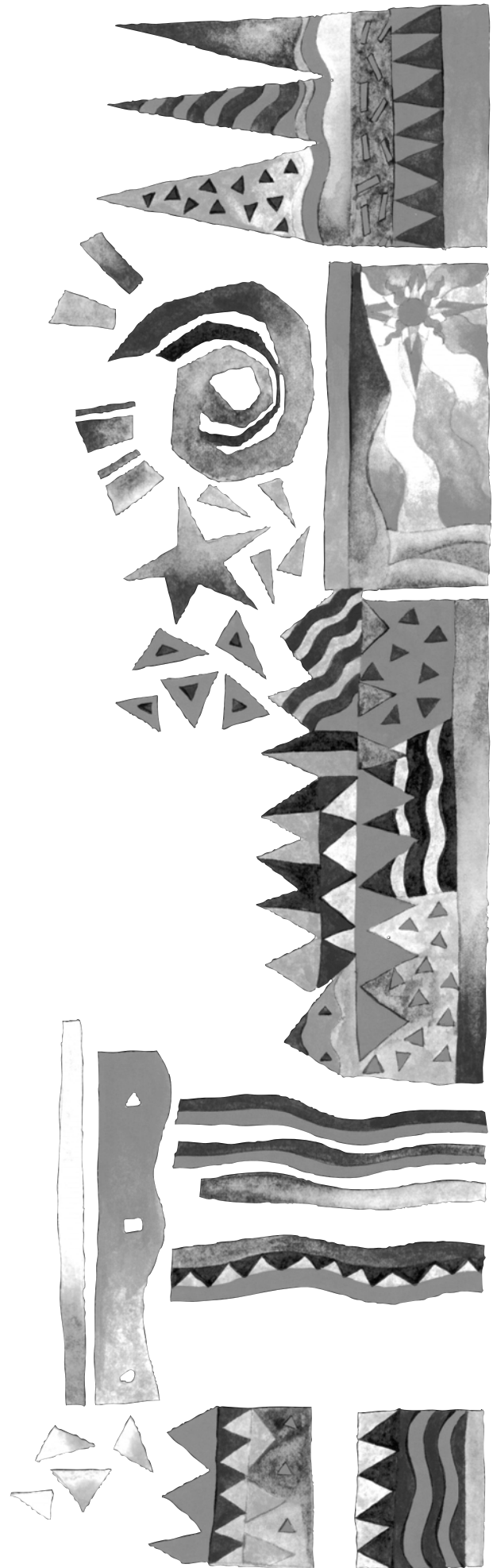
protect children?

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Freda Briggs is Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood and Family Studies at the University of South Australia. In 2000 she was named Senior Australian of the Year. She is the recipient of the Inaugural Australian Humanitarian Award, the ANZAC Fellowship Award, the Jean Denton Memorial Fellowship and the Ceswick Fellowship Award.

For the last fifteen years Freda has been evaluating components of the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* programme. She is a tireless advocate for the regular and careful teaching of this programme to all young people in New Zealand schools.

Freda brings to her work a somewhat unique mix of background experiences. She has been a business-woman, social worker, police constable, teacher and university academic. She is also a wife, mother and grandmother.

Freda Briggs has made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of New Zealand youth and is an outstanding role model to the wider community.

I am often asked whether there is any evidence that "Keeping Ourselves Safe" (KOS) really helps children to protect themselves.

If it is successful, why are reports of child sexual abuse increasing every year? Shouldn't reports be decreasing? And why are Police Education Officers (PEOs) involved? Aren't parents the best people to teach personal safety skills?

In this paper, I will provide some answers to those questions.

1: WHY SCHOOL PROGRAMMES ARE NECESSARY

a) Commonly used parenting styles make children vulnerable to sexual predators

The New Zealand research findings of Briggs and Hawkins from 1990 to 1996 confirmed that child protection education is essential for the development of young children's safety knowledge and safety skills. Unfortunately, commonly used parenting methods make children vulnerable to sexual abuse. For example, most children are taught that to be good, they must obey adults. Parents often leave children with child-minders saying, "Be a good boy/girl and do what ----- says". Children learn that it's 'naughty' to say 'No'. As a consequence, without a child protection programme they will do what an older abuser tells them to do even if they know that the behaviour is wrong. *Their greatest fear is to be reprimanded by parents or caregivers for disobedience.* Reprimand is associated with the withdrawal of approval and love.

Our research shows that most parents (and uninformed teachers) assure children that all secrets have to be kept, especially family secrets. Children believe that they will "get into big trouble" if they "tell". Bad secrets must never be told because they "upset people" and make them sad or angry. This secrecy enables offenders to commit crimes against children with little fear of apprehension.

Well-meaning parents introduce modesty training when children are 3-4 years old. They reprimand children for "lavatory talk", handling their genitals or appearing naked when there are visitors. While this is intended for protection, children learn that there is a taboo on genitals.

Some parents protect *themselves* from the risk of children embarrassing them in public by giving boys "pet names" for penis that other people will not understand. Mothers with British backgrounds have traditionally used "front bottom and back bottom", "between your legs" and "down there" when referring to girls' genitals. It is especially difficult for Pacific Island children to report concerns about sexual matters because they have no vocabulary to describe the private parts of their bodies. To mention sexual matters/genitals is considered to be the worst form of obscenity. This taboo was imposed by European missionaries when they introduced Christianity to the South Pacific Islands. As a result, it has not been possible to provide child protection education in homes or

schools and evidence of abuse has been ignored because the taboo affects both police and teachers. Not surprisingly, the South Pacific Islands have been targeted by paedophile tourism.

An additional handicap reported by Indian and Samoan New Zealand children was their parents' inability to support them if they were sexually abused by family members of higher rank in the family hierarchy. Thus, if they were abused by their grandfathers or uncles older than their mothers or fathers, their parents would feel helpless to protect them.

b) Parents are unreliable teachers of safety skills

Few parents or teachers understand the dynamics of child sexual abuse. Without information, they tend to believe the myths that protect offenders, such as that abuse only happens to adolescent girls, that victims "ask for it" and only males offend. Parents often mistakenly believe that young children will "forget about it" if no-one mentions the abuse again. If a mother is emotionally or financially tied to the abuser, she is likely to accept his explanation rather than the child's. Our research in both the North and South Islands (1996) showed that when children disclosed abuse to parents and teachers who had not been involved in KOS, victims were disbelieved and even punished for using disgusting talk. It is sad that large numbers of children from 5-8 years said that "Adults stick together...They don't believe/take any notice of/listen to kids".

The research confirmed that New Zealand parents are complacent. Despite the publication of statistics by the media, some still denied that sexual abuse happens. If they accepted that it happened, they denied the size of the problem or clung to the mistaken belief that their families were immune. "We don't know anyone like that", said some, believing that offenders were mentally ill or could be recognised by their appearance. Others imagined that because they transported their children to and from school and sports, no protection was necessary, "We know where s/he is" was a common response. In other words, parents trusted all relatives, school staff, clergy, sports coaches, scouts, neighbours (etc) not realising that sex offenders deliberately create relationships with parents and develop their trust to improve their access to potential victims. At the opposite extreme, some mothers lived in such violent environments that they viewed abuse as an inevitable and inescapable aspect of life. Some blamed themselves for their own abuse. Interestingly, when mothers were victims of father-daughter incest, they did nothing to protect their own children from the abuser. They rationalised that, "He knows that I know what he's like so he won't dare do it to my kids". Our research with offenders showed that their reaction was quite different to the one expected: "She knows what I did to her and she hasn't reported me. She sends her kids round here so I can use them for sex. I'm safe".

In common with their British, American and Australian counterparts, 75% of New Zealand parents failed to attend information sessions at school about child abuse prevention programmes – KOS in the New Zealand case. Attendance was only satisfactory when school staff telephoned parents who didn't respond to invitations. When interviewed (1996), New Zealand parents said they didn't attend because they were too busy. Sports training was deemed to be more important. The two main reasons given for poor attendance however were that child protection is a depressing subject and parents think it is irrelevant because their children are safe. Their complacency was not justified given that 55 of the 255 students involved in our Intermediate School survey had already reported offences. As some children were withdrawn from the survey because of recent abuse (and the abuse of boys is rarely reported because of cultural and other factors), the number of victims was likely to have been much higher. Parental complacency changed to anger and blame when children had been abused. Parents blamed schools, police, the judiciary and everyone else for failing to provide adequate information.

When questioned, New Zealand parents had unrealistic expectations relating to children's abilities to protect themselves. For example, despite giving children no information about sexual misbehaviour, they expected children to know intuitively that it was wrong and reportable. Secondly, despite relating goodness to obedience, they expected children to disobey sex offenders regardless of their age, relationship or position of authority. In addition, despite teaching children to keep secrets, they expected them to break the rule when secrecy involved not-previously-mentioned sexual abuse. And although parents became angry when children talked about genitals, they expected their children to break the taboos and immediately report sexual misbehaviour to them. And of course, children will not do that unless they know, from past experience, that the adults can cope with the information and will not become angry and blame them. Some children never tell. In our survey of 198 Australian male victims of sexual abuse committed by an average of 8.5 different offenders and involving thousands of offences, only 26 reports were made; 25 involved mothers and one reported to a teacher. Only one boy was believed and the rest were punished. In New Zealand, 22% of 5-8 year olds had already sought and failed to enlist parents' help to stop unwanted and inappropriate touching, tickling, squeezing and kissing. Children complained that, without adult intervention, the perpetrators think that their complaints are amusing and "They do it all the more".

Interestingly, the children of Police Education Officers and child protection workers were no better informed than others. Their parents admitted that they had never discussed child protection issues at home. They assumed (wrongly) that their work would "rub off" on their children. It hadn't!

Our research confirms evidence from a national survey of 2000 American children by Finkelhor and colleagues that teaching children about the risks of sexual abuse helps them to cope with real life encounters. In their summary, Finkelhor et. al (1993) said:

- "When victimised or threatened, children with the most comprehensive programmes are likely to use the kinds of self-protection strategies recommended by prevention educators". However, even short programmes were better than none.
- "When victimised or threatened, they were more likely to feel that they were successful in protecting themselves"
- "They were more likely to disclose to someone about the victimisation and attempts".

American children in the most comprehensive programmes could not always stop or prevent abuse from occurring but they were the ones most likely to report it quickly and feel good about their handling of it. This, in turn, reduced the likelihood of severe, long-term mental health problems. The best results occurred when parents were involved in programmes and reinforced safety strategies at home.

To protect children from sexual abuse, it is essential that programmes involving parents are made available in all schools.

2: BEFORE KOS: YOUNG CHILDREN'S BELIEFS RELATING TO SAFETY

To learn about children's approaches to safety issues prior to the introduction of KOS, we interviewed 378 boys and girls of 5-8 years in fifteen primary schools. We asked "What if.." and "Just suppose that..." problem solving questions to elicit children's suggestions for handling a variety of potentially unsafe hypothetical situations.

The most important finding was that, for more than half a century, parents, teachers and police have warned children not to talk to, accept anything from or go anywhere with strangers and, throughout that time, no-one seems to have paused to enquire whether children comprehended what a stranger was. The reality is that the concept of stranger is too complex for 5-8 year olds to understand. They believe that a stranger is a stereotyped male who has evil, leering eyes, wears a black mask or balaclava, black clothes and drives an old black car (as shown in some media advertising). Children told us that strangers steal and murder children in their beds and they had nightmares about these creatures that are part human, part monster. Class after class of New Zealand children told us that they had never seen a stranger in their lives but would recognise one instantly if they saw one. They had never seen the writer before but ridiculed the suggestion that she might be

a stranger because, "Our teachers would never let strangers come into our school... You can't be a stranger 'cos we know your name.... you know my name.... I've been talking to you for a minute so you're not a stranger... You're a lady and ladies aren't strangers... You've got a brief case and that means you work and strangers don't work. They only steal". Women are considered to be safe although some of the most horrendous multiple child sex murders have involved women, for example Myra Hindley and Rose West in the UK.

Alarming, prior to KOS, children of 5-8 years revealed that they would accompany anyone who did not fit their unrealistic image of "stranger". At this age, they are incapable of judging adults' motives and if people look kind and seem kind, they are judged to be kind and, therefore, trustworthy. Asked what they would do to stay safe if they lost their parents in a crowded place, 50% of children said they would approach someone who had a smiling face. On the other hand, they would not tell a shop assistant or a police officer that they were lost because "Police might tell you off for getting lost", "They wouldn't know where I live", and, "They couldn't take me home because they have important jobs to do".

Other worrying findings were that, before KOS, New Zealand children of 5-8 years would:

- keep all adults' secrets (and bad secrets in particular) because children are punished if they disclose them;
- obey adults even when they knew that their demands were wrong;
- never report sexual misbehaviour to an adult because reporting would involve rude talk for which they would be punished;
- not expect parents, police or teachers to protect them.

Children explained that rude talk and rude behaviour are naughty. "Naughty means that you've done something wrong and it's your own fault. Naughty means you're bad, no-one will love you and you'll be punished". Parental blame produces self-blame, guilt and embarrassment and embarrassment necessitated further secrecy to avoid more embarrassment. Before KOS, children made it clear that if sexual misbehaviour occurred, they would have to keep it secret because it must be their own fault. With such thinking it is scarcely surprising that so few offences are reported.

3: ONE YEAR AFTER KOS

The follow-up study showed the value of KOS and its superiority over the Australian-American Protective Behaviours programme that we evaluated in 1989-90. All of the children made gains in knowledge and continued to make gains in the second year, suggesting that some teachers and parents reinforced KOS strategies between modules. For some identifiable groups of children, the programme was an outstanding success. Two factors affecting the development of children's problem-solving skills were the commitment and enthusiasm of the class teacher and socio-economic factors. Between 93% and 100% of children with teachers identified by their principals as "highly committed" achieved gains in from five to eight areas of knowledge measured by the researchers. The children who made least progress were those from low-income families in socially disadvantaged areas taught by negative teachers. These were also the children who had the least knowledge when we tested them prior to the introduction of the KOS programme. Some knew their rights but found that the knowledge was academic given that the adults in their lives chose to ignore them. They viewed themselves as hopeless and helpless, 65% saying that they could neither turn to their parents nor their teachers for protection. We were interested to know why parents' incomes affected the benefits children gained from the programme and found that those parents in low income families were the ones least likely to participate in joint homework and the reinforcement of concepts at home. Low-income parents were the ones least likely to attend information sessions, read child protection materials, engage in joint homework or reinforce safety strategies at home. It became clear that parent participation was especially important in areas with high unemployment and large migrant communities. While sexual abuse crosses all boundaries, there is a higher risk for children in low-income families (Finkelhor, 1984). These children had the least knowledge before they started the programme and made smaller gains than those from middle class families.

While it was not the intention of this study to systematically assess the rate of sexual abuse in the children participating, 4.3% of the total sample of 252 children made reports of sexual abuse by babysitters. In addition, KOS prompted a New Plymouth girl to disclose incest while the Police Education Officer and I were at the school. These reports were not as a result of specific questioning about abuse but emerged from discussion about the programme.

Briggs and Hawkins (1996) concluded that the value of KOS over all other available programmes was that:

- it was written by New Zealand curriculum experts to cater for New Zealand's unique culture and children's levels of development (rather than by social workers trying to provide a generic programme for all ages);
- precise teaching materials and lesson plans are provided to assist teachers who lack confidence for teaching the sensitive but essential parts of the programme;
- it is used by the whole school and not spasmodically by individual teachers;
- the programme is introduced and supported by Police Education Officers who have received specialist training;
- parent participation and evaluation is built into KOS;

- the programme refers to common forms of sexual misbehaviour using problem-solving questions;
- the programme uses children's everyday language;
- KOS combines a variety of approaches;
- KOS has been independently evaluated by university researchers and amendments have been made taking account of findings.

4: THE VALUE OF INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL KOS

To find out whether children had used KOS strategies, we interviewed 255 Intermediate School students aged 10-12 years and parents in eight schools in both the North and South Islands. The only parents omitted from the survey were those of students in a boarding school.

Parents and students were highly satisfied with the quality, delivery and effectiveness of the programme. KOS had not caused anxieties for students nor had there been any incidents of false reporting. Parents reported that when children had been exposed to KOS at both junior and intermediate school, confidence increased and there was a greater sense of openness in child-parent relationships. Parents said that joint homework helped them to open up channels of communication involving the most sensitive issues that they would otherwise have avoided. The importance of the junior programme was confirmed by both parents and students at the Intermediate level.

By contrast, those who attended junior schools that lacked KOS felt deprived when they compared their knowledge and confidence with that of their Intermediate School classmates. The openness in child-parent relationships was missing and both they and their parents found that the traditional taboos relating to sexual matters were already entrenched. As a consequence, these students and their parents said that they were too embarrassed to discuss KOS at home and parents were then unable to contribute to the reinforcement of safety concepts. The best results came from students who had experienced both the primary school and intermediate KOS modules.

All students knew that sexual abuse is reportable and 21% had reported confirmed cases as a result of KOS. In addition, ten parents had made reports on behalf of children and because these reports were recent, the victims were not included in the research.

Eighty percent of girls identified as having learning problems had already been sexually abused more than once by between 2 -10 people. (The smaller number of boys identified prevented separate analysis). All of these cases had been substantiated.

The abusers of children with developmental delay and learning difficulties were local youths (pack rapists), close male relatives and brothers' "best mates". One child was forced by her father to sniff kerosene before he raped her. Fortunately she lost consciousness and was taken to hospital. The offender was convicted and received a prison sentence but the mother supported him and the victim was removed into foster care where she was sexually abused by her foster father and his eldest son. It was not until "Keeping Ourselves Safe" was introduced by the PEO that this girl found the courage to report the foster parent and son.

International research findings, especially from Canada and the UK, confirm that from 70-80% of children with disabilities suffer from sexual abuse. There is obviously a need for intensive child protection programmes for these children.

Thanks to KOS and the patience of Nelson Police Education Officer Ian McKittrick, girls at a Special School were all aware of their rights and what to do if they encountered sexually inappropriate behaviours. The PEO advised them to tell a school social worker or school nurse and a large number of confirmed reports resulted. KOS was shown to be effective, albeit with a great deal of slow-handed care and reinforcement. Unfortunately, while these children were well protected in a residential school setting, they were sent back to dangerous home environments for school holidays. This worried them and their teachers. I visited them shortly before the Easter break and noted the tension and anxiety that children exhibited relating to whether they would be able to practice KOS strategies in the face of inevitable attempts to use them for sex and/or drugs in their dysfunctional families.

In the evaluation of the Intermediate School modules we specifically looked for evidence that students had used KOS safety strategies. That is why we interviewed parents as well as students. It is important to bear in mind that many of the children interviewed had not attended primary schools that offered the junior programme and some had only recently been introduced to KOS at the Intermediate level. We found a marked difference in the responses between these students and those who had participated in KOS at primary school. The parents of the students who 'missed out' confirmed that they and their offspring had been disadvantaged by the lack of availability of the junior programme. Nevertheless,

- 52% of students provided evidence of using KOS strategies to stay safe. Parents provided confirmation and additional evidence.
- 10.7% said that they had never needed to use KOS for emergencies because they were now more safety conscious. They gave examples of how they had avoided dangerous situations using specific strategies

Interviews with students showed that 96% had used KOS strategies to stay safe. Claims were confirmed by parents. Fifty-six percent had used KOS for handling serious bullying, most of which occurred in school. Eighteen percent had been offered drugs, 83% by other students and 18% by adults who were usually family members or friends. Fourteen percent had been given alcohol by other children. Eighteen percent had been accosted by strangers in cars and descriptions were reported. Twenty-eight percent were shown pornography by peers or older males. Eighteen percent reported sexual abuse.

Although the statistics match North American findings, the most alarming disclosure was that so many 10-11 year old girls identified as low achievers had reported confirmed cases of sexual abuse. International research shows that victims with disabilities are less likely to be believed than non-disabled children when they report abuse (for a variety of reasons). A weakness of the KOS programme was that it instructed children to report abuse to people they trusted. Initially, children only told their mothers, none of whom believed or supported them. Some victims were punished for "making up bad stories" and the abuse continued for up to a year, ie until the children disclosed the offences to other people. These children lived in the least safe, least affectionate homes and were subjected to all forms of abuse: psychological, drugs, alcohol, pornography and physical abuse.

The encouraging finding was that, with patience, it is possible to teach people with intellectual disabilities that they have the right to safety and that they can stop offences even though they may not be able to change their homes and relatives.

5: PARENTS' EVIDENCE OF KOS STRATEGIES BEING USED

When asked about safety issues, parents were concerned about physical, sexual and psychological bullying at school, denigration and humiliation, threats of sexual and physical violence, diverse forms of intimidation and damage to property. Boys harassed girls because they perceived them as weaker. Although children feared that reporting bullies would result in retaliation, that was not the reality. KOS and Kia Kaha helped children to report incidents and reporting resulted in effective intervention.

Forty-one percent of parents were aware of their sons being physically attacked. Eight percent informed us that their children had stopped attempted sexual abuse and reported this to them. Only half of the parents reported this to the authorities.

Too many parents reported that principals tried to "cover up" sexual abuse that happened on school premises, irrespective of whether offenders were employees or students. A parent complained that sexual abuse by a school caretaker had been ignored.

However, parents also tended to protect family members rather than children. Some mothers told us that their children had been physically and sexually abused by their

fathers. A mother disclosed that, as a result of KOS her daughter had reported (substantiated) father-daughter incest that included oral and genital rape.

A father reported that his family was currently in crisis because, as a result of KOS, his daughter had disclosed sexual abuse by his son-in-law. The child had previously kept this secret because of the threat that she would be responsible for breaking up her sister's marriage if she 'told'.

Some parents also engaged in 'cover-ups' to protect family members after children disclosed abuse to them. Eight percent of parents were aware of cases of sexual molestation of both their male and female children. Only half of these cases were reported to police. A mother disclosed that three generations of her husband's family were incest victims/offenders. Her method of protection was limited to the avoidance of family gatherings. Another mother said that several generations of her husband's family were incestuous and "all of the kids are at high risk". She valued KOS input because her children were continually practicing their skills, given that she and other family members refused to report the offenders. In addition, two students told me that their parents were aware of mother-son incest in their extended families. Their parents feared the offenders and supportive relatives and "would not get involved". The students reported this to KOS teachers who contacted the Child Protection Coordinator. (A representative of CYPFS visited the school as a result of these statements).

Some parents reported that children had been sexually abused at "sleep-overs" at friends' houses and the KOS video on this subject had been very helpful.

Three fathers and one mother informed us that their (4) sons were juvenile sex offenders. Victims made complaints to their school principals as a result of KOS. Parents of the offenders thought that the schools handled the complaints well and all of the boys were in behaviour modification programmes. Unfortunately these programmes were not specifically for juvenile sex offenders and neither parents nor school staff had considered the possibility that the boys might have been victims of sexual abuse; they automatically assumed that the behaviour related to early sexual development and the seductiveness of girls.

Another parent reported that a boy in the same class as her daughter had been sexually abusing girls for three years and constantly made sexual suggestions while in the classroom and playground. He was "obsessed with sex" and masturbated publicly. After a KOS lesson, her daughter reported to the school principal that the boy had asked her to provide oral sex. The principal took no action. The girl reported other recent offences including offences committed by a cousin but the mother had not reported these to the authorities.

Other reports included the following:

- A mother reported that their daughter had reported being sexually molested by a male foster child in their home.
- A seven-year-old girl reported a sexual assault by a "problem boy". The parent merely reported it to the offender's parents.
- Several children had reported inappropriate sexual behaviours by male strangers including descriptions of men and their vehicles. Two reported attempted abductions by known paedophiles. All of these incidents occurred in rural/semi-rural areas.
- Boys on a beach were approached by a man who made indecent suggestions. They contacted police and made a report.
- A man stalked the children through sand dunes and they sought help.
- 18 parents confirmed that their children reported sexual abuse immediately after KOS lessons.

There was evidence from students that KOS strategies had been used to report sexual abuse by boys at school but victims, as well as parents, were dissatisfied with school responses:

- *"He (the offender) has been reported many times and it made no difference. Three quarters of the girls in our class were affected and, if you complained, he used obscene language. He said disgusting things about what he wanted to do to me and touched me in an intimidating way".*
- *"The girls and some of the boys got together and reported him and he left the school later. He sexually molested and touched girls' genitals quite often. They kept on reporting it but it was only when the whole group complained that it was taken seriously".*
- *"It was at my last school. He took out his penis in the library corner. He knocked me over and laid on top of me. There were lots of boys and girls who saw what was happening. Nobody did anything to help me. I tried to fight him off and a teacher came and sent me to the principal for being aggressive. Nothing happened to the boy".*
- *"I got fed up with other (male) kids asking me to play with them (their genitals). They were three boys the same age as me".*
- *He tried twice. Then there was mum's cousin. Then there was a boy at this school called Mark. He did it a first time then a second time then all the time and (after KOS) I reported him".*

Victims' parents complained that when reports related to juvenile offenders, school principals did not know how to handle them and some "did nothing". For example:

- *"We only told the school and the school wants to cover it up because it's middle class and things like that aren't supposed to happen here. They tell you that they've acted on it but I doubt it because it's still happening. That kid has big problems and he'll get into serious trouble if no-one deals with it".*
- *"The schools seem to do a cover-up job when juveniles abuse. They don't take it seriously. This boy clearly has a problem but its been ignored when he should be receiving help".*

Many statements suggested that while KOS was educating children to report sexual abuse, the adults responsible for their care were inadequately educated and neither supported nor provided counselling for victims nor obtained therapy for perpetrators. If mothers were not involved in KOS, few had sufficient knowledge or courage to report relatives to the authorities. Some continued to protect habitual offenders relying on children to protect themselves. Only one adult offender was about to be prosecuted. Another had been acquitted "because of the age of the child". None of the persistent juvenile offenders were reported to authorities by school staff and as a consequence, they were not offered counselling and were not assessed for the likelihood that they were abuse victims.

Forty- two children who had reported sexual abuse were prepared to talk about what happened. For others, the offences were too recent and while they were prepared to say that something had happened and they had reported it, they didn't want to go into detail. Given the sensitivity involved, it is a credit to KOS, PEO's and teachers that children had the confidence to disclose offences.

6: STUDENTS' EXAMPLES OF KOS BEING USED TO REPORT ABUSE

- "I have just reported that dad sexually abused me when I was about five or six".
- "I have reported that dad raped me. I tried to call mum".
- "Aunty's boyfriend said he wanted sex with me. This time I said, "Have it with your own wife". I was scared because he was staying at my house and he wanted me and he was very old, like you. He came into my room once and did it. Once he got me at a party. We get lots of relatives doing it. My mum doesn't seem to understand that it's not OK. They have sex with anyone ... all the guys .. when I'm in the house. Husbands find out and then they fight".
- "First I was raped by my grandfather. Then, later by other members of my family and then friends of my brothers but my brothers didn't join in. I reported it to a social worker after KOS".
- "First I was sexually abused by my real mother and father and it carried on until I

got adopted. Then I was abused by several foster fathers and heaps of older kids at school and in my foster homes. I've been abused by ten adults altogether".

- "I've been abused by six guys at different times. They were my mother's boarders and my uncles".
- "First my brother when I was eleven and he was sixteen. Then by my uncle when I was twelve. Then when I was thirteen by dad's friends. I said "No" to my brother but he took no notice".
- "My friend's dad came into my bed when I stayed there for the night on a sleep-over. He exposed himself and demanded oral sex. I have now reported it".
- "Dad did it. Mum found out. I told her. She was asleep when he came into my room".
- "I was molested by both of my stepmothers and two other guys who were friends of the family".
- "I saw my mother raped by a family friend at a child's birthday party. We reported it to police. We've been to see a psychiatrist. I still have nightmares about it. The rapist's wife stabbed him in the leg after we left the party".
- "My father got me to watch a porn video in his bedroom then he raped me. He did it to my sisters as well."
- "I was abused by a friend of the family.. the same person who showed me porn magazines. It happened over several years. My mother had noticed changes in my behaviour.. so I told her".
- "Male foster family members did it to me while I was in foster homes".
- "An uncle did it when visiting mum for the weekend".
- "I was staying with mum's friends and her son exposed himself and told me to touch his private parts".
- "I reported another student for sexual abuse and using threats of violence".
- "Thanks to Constable McKittrick, I've learned to stand up for my rights because I know what my rights are now. I know how to handle the drunks at people's houses and I'll never let them touch me again".
- "I reported a sex offender who abused girls in our class".
- "I told my mum about the abuse but she didn't believe me. I kept on telling people until someone told the police".
- "I reported sexual abuse (after a KOS session)".

A girl remembered the relevant KOS video and reported indecent exposure by an adult at a school camp.

Thirty-three children gave information about the frequency of abuse by known perpetrators. In 16 cases there was one offence. In six cases, sexual abuse was commonplace or it happened several times, 31% of sexual acts occurred at home and 25% occurred at school. Only 47% of reported offences were passed on to child protection authorities.

As a result of KOS, 93% of children recognised that older people were not allowed to use children for sex and some PEO's had successfully transmitted the message that sexual abuse is unfair because it constitutes an abuse of power and contravenes children's rights.

7: KOS WAS USED TO PREVENT CRIME, STAY SAFE AND HANDLE EMERGENCIES OUTSIDE HOME

Many examples were given of how KOS helps children to handle emergencies safely.

- "When people ask me to rob and steal and do sex things I now say 'No'".
- "I use KOS to resist kids who want me to do things that are wrong. I now say 'No' whereas I didn't before".
- In a horrific emergency in rural Taranaki, an 8 year old boy remembered his KOS training to get help for his dead twin and dead and seriously injured school friends in an accident involving the school bus. The boy ran to the nearest property for help and when no-one answered the door, he broke in and used the emergency number to call an ambulance and police assistance. That school was especially grateful for KOS and the work of their PEO.
- Seven children had reported and stopped serious acts of bullying as a result of KOS sessions. A policeman's son used KOS strategies for handling a violent situation after his dad had arrested the father of a bigger boy in the same school.
- Some boys said they no longer go into public toilets alone.
- Four boys now observed safety rules on the beach (where they previously were unaware of them), no longer swimming out of their depth and no longer going in the sea alone.
- Most girls said that they remembered KOS strategies whenever they were babysitting and staying with friends overnight. The KOS video showed the father inviting babysitters to watch porn after his wife had gone to bed.
- One boy said that he now says "No" to porn. (Aged 11).
- Eighteen percent of children reported various incidents involving adults attempting to abduct them in cars either on the way to school or in the neighbourhood. These were most prevalent in rural parts of the South Island. All had been reported to school staff, a shop assistant, a neighbour or parents with descriptions of both people and vehicles involved. It was widely believed that attempted abductions and single offences by strangers had increased in the area because children were now more knowledgeable of their rights, thanks to the school programme.

8: CHILDREN REPORTED USING KOS STRATEGIES TO STAY SAFE IN POTENTIALLY UNSAFE SITUATIONS AT HOME

These included:

- strategies for answering the phone safely when alone at home;
- strategies for opening/ not opening the door when alone at home; for example: "I refused to open the door for a man who asked to use the phone of the house where I was babysitting".
- checking doors and windows to ensure that they are locked when leaving the house, when going to bed or when at home alone;
- not giving their names or other details when answering phone calls;
- "I needed to remember how to handle emergencies when someone cut our phone line and was trying to break into the house. I got out of another door and ran next door for help".

9: KOS STRATEGIES WERE USED TO ASSIST OTHER CHILDREN

56% of children gave examples of how they had used KOS to help other children to stay safe.

14.2% gave examples of helping abused friends to report beatings by their fathers. They accompanied the victims to see school staff and they provided support.

- "My friend has a drunk dad. She was crying because her dad bashes her. I told her to tell me about it. Then I comforted her and told her what to do".
- "My friend was grouchy and he told me that his dad bashes him and bruised him and I encouraged him to talk to the teacher".
- Three female students told their parents about the physical abuse of their young cousins. All three parents responded that it was none of their business and they should not interfere. Because of KOS, the girls were more concerned about the children than about adult family relationships and they reported the offences to the school nurse or principal.

Reports of sexual abuse were often triggered by KOS videos.

- My friend asked me what she should do when her father comes home and tries to come on her when he's drunk. I told her to tell her mum and if her mum doesn't believe her to tell another adult she trusts".
- "I told my sister to report the sexual abuse and she did".
- "I advised a Form 2 girl to report sexual abuse last year. She ran out of the room crying during KOS. I also advised a Standard 4 girl to report sexual abuse"
- "A friend revealed that her dad abused her when her mum was in hospital. I helped her to report it to police".
- "My friend told me about sexual abuse. I advised her to "tell" and gave her the

confidence by going with her to tell her mother who rang police. I gave her support".

- "I helped a girl to report abuse to a teacher".
- "I told them to report their abuse to their counsellors or police".
- "I told my friend to report sexual abuse".

KOS was used for a wide range of safety issues:

- One child said that she saved her niece from choking on a lolly that stuck in her wind-pipe.

"I did what Mr. McKittrick (Nelson PEO) told us to do and applied pressure to her abdomen and it worked".

- Another reported that she applied artificial respiration (taught in water safety) when her two-year old niece fell face first in a paddling pool and stopped breathing.
- "I stepped in to stop a young kid near the shop getting in a car with a male stranger and I reported it".
- "I helped a lost child and stopped her from going off with a stranger".
- "I stopped a friend from running away from home and persuaded him to get help".
- "I told younger kids to get away when I saw a male stranger offering them lollies".
- "Someone stopped in a car and offered my friend a ride because it was raining and I stopped him from going".
- "At the cricket club a kid told me that their dad grows dope and beats them up and their mother and he was scared and I offered to go with him to report it".

Most children had shared their knowledge of KOS safety strategies with younger siblings and the children for whom they acted as baby-sitters (albeit under-age babysitting). These safety hints were confirmed by parents as including safety from fire, traffic, water, avoiding potentially dangerous people, bullying and how to stay safe when lost.

- "My friend was sleeping over at a stranger's house. I warned her what to do if she had any problems""(referring to the KOS video).
- "I give advice to my sister. Although she's 17, she is irresponsible and does dangerous things. She smokes and drink drives and takes drugs and puts herself at risk".
- "I helped a girl in our class. She's homeless and nobody likes her. She does very unsafe things like getting into strangers' cars".
- "I talked to my friend and went with her to see the teacher because her father takes drugs and bashes her".

KOS evaluations revealed a high level of violence in New Zealand families. Fifteen intermediate school children admitted carrying weapons to school for "self protection". All of these children were classified by teachers as "low achievers".

At two schools, all of the girls in two classes had been sexually abused by the same boy. These were serious offences. At another school, boys had also been victimised. The offences occurred in the toilets or classroom when there was no teacher present. Principals confirmed that offences had been reported. None of the victims were offered counselling. Some offenders were merely reprimanded and continued to abuse. One was transferred to another school with neither counselling nor treatment, making it likely that he would continue to offend. In addition, students reported sexually inappropriate behaviours by older boys in school playgrounds, eg. indecent exposure and threats to rape girls if they did not do what the boys wanted.

In the Intermediate School, there is tremendous pressure on students to conform to peer-group expectations. Without a well-taught KOS programme, students bowed to peer pressure to keep secrets about criminal behaviour involving sex, drugs or other crimes. Although there was still an element of peer loyalty, KOS gave students the confidence to report abuse and help others to report. A PEO in Dunedin used a successful tactic persuading teachers and students that reporting offenders was the kindest thing to do because that enabled them to obtain the help they needed. Without help, he said, the wrong behaviour would continue. Students particularly related to the suggestion that *"if it isn't reported, children might think it's alright and then they'd grow up and do it to their children"*.

10: THE EVALUATION OF THE SECONDARY KOS PROGRAMME

I evaluated the secondary stage of KOS in 2001 and found that, with one exception, if PEO's did not participate, the programme was not used.

We surveyed health coordinators, PEO's and teachers and ran focus groups with them. While they all thought that Secondary KOS was an excellent programme, they believed that insufficient time was allocated to health curriculum in general. Because it wasn't examinable, health was ascribed a low priority in the school timetable. However, the most important reason for non-usage was that health teachers were mostly trained to teach PE and they resented the fact that health curriculum had been forced upon them by the Ministry of Education. All of the male teachers said that they were too embarrassed and too ill informed about child abuse to risk tackling this subject with adolescents.

Secondary school students disclosed alarming safety issues. Most girls were afraid of rape or sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies and yet about half were already engaging in sexual activity. They said that they did this because of peer group pressure/expectations, not because they enjoyed it. Girls as young as 13 attended parties "to get drunk". For protection, they relied precariously on the off-chance that their friends would be less drunk. Some were allowed by parents to go to night-clubs and travel home alone in the early hours of the morning. In a class in the Hutt Valley, female students said that 50% of the group had been raped.

Irrespective of social class or the academic level of the school attended, boys feared unprovoked violence. About half of the boys above the age of twelve were engaging in unsafe sex. While we were collecting horrendous data, some naïve (women) health teachers in Catholic schools proclaimed that KOS was inappropriate for the secondary age group because it mentioned child abuse! It is not surprising then that the *students overwhelmingly nominated PEO's as being not only the best people but the only people competent to take responsibility for teaching the secondary programme*. They commonly referred to their teachers as "dinosaurs" who lacked a knowledge of modern-day teen life. They said that they could not trust teachers to keep confidential information confidential. School counsellors were considered to be only marginally less archaic and unreliable.

The students all knew local Police Education Officers because of other courses taught in their schools. They thought that PEO's had advantages over school staff in that they "know about real life", are not embarrassed discussing subjects such as drugs, rape and sexual abuse, were trusted, not easily shocked and were non-judgmental. Students said they could discuss sensitive issues more openly with them than with other professionals. Some suggested that school nurses could share the teaching. Few could talk to their own parents.

11: THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICE EDUCATION OFFICERS IN KOS

a) The value of PEOs in Primary Schools

I visited many schools in both the North and South Islands from 1975-93 as a consultant to the Ministry of Education and, from 1990, as a researcher for New Zealand Police. Initially, teachers were very suspicious of PEO's, fearing that their professional territory was being invaded by officers who would use an inappropriate, insensitive, authoritarian approach. Some doubted whether police could have anything to contribute to school curriculum. When I conducted the first research in 1990, that attitude had changed dramatically. Teachers, parents and students throughout New Zealand confirmed the value of the input of PEO's. This was confirmed in all of the relevant Briggs and Hawkins articles published internationally on the results of our evaluations of Keeping Ourselves Safe.

What evidence is there that PEO's are important in *"Keeping Ourselves Safe"*?

In NZCER SET No.2 1991, page 4, we wrote that *"the least safe responses came from children in schools where KOS was taught haphazardly by teachers. However when "rude behaviour" issues were discussed openly with Police Education Officers, children were confident of their rights and how to proceed to stay safe"*.

In the British publication, Child Abuse Review Vol: 3 272-284 (1994) our article entitled, *"Choosing between child protection programmes"* showed the superior results from KOS compared with the Protective Behaviours programme. On page 281-2, we gave the reason for the New Zealand programme's success as the *"strong network of police support for teachers using the programme"* and a major feature of this successful approach was that *"Teachers are supported by the school coordinator with support from police education officers"*.

In Briggs and Hawkins' article, *"Keeping Ourselves Safe. Who benefits?"* in SET 5 Students at Risk published by NZCER undated but probably around 1996, we made a comparison between the NZ and Australian/American programmes. Emphasising the superiority of KOS, we wrote that the most important feature was that *"New Zealand schools are supported by Police Education Officers"*.

One of the advantages of using PEOs in schools was to counter some of the negative images that modern day children have of police. For example, prior to KOS, when we asked children who they could safely approach for help if they became lost at a crowded event at which a large numbers of police officers were on duty, the only respondents who said that they would approach police were the children of police officers. Police were no longer viewed as people who help lost children and keep them safe. They were perceived as remote and punitive. According to children, they drove fast cars, fined and arrested people, took them to jail and even shot them. By comparison, PEOs were viewed as trustworthy and approachable friends...even by the children whose fathers were in jail. When I visited a school with a PEO, children invariably approached him to volunteer information about local crimes.

b) *The value of PEO's in the Intermediate School*

In *"The value of Keeping Ourselves Safe: The views of intermediate school students and their parents"* published by NZCER (SET One 1999 page 2) we reiterated that: *"The role of Police Education Officers and the Youth Education Service was greatly appreciated by parents and children. They felt that the problem of sexual abuse was taken more seriously as a result of police involvement"*.

The same conclusions were reached in a keynote paper presented at the *NZ Inaugural Child and Family Policy Conference* in Dunedin (1996) and published in *"Investing in Children: Primary Prevention Strategies"* (Otago University 1996).

The Intermediate programme was, like the Junior and Middle Primary modules, highly successful. On page 24 of our report to the Commissioner of Police (1996), parents' appreciation of PEO input was recorded:

- *"Most of the parents expressed unsolicited appreciation of police involvement in school programmes. They said that the support of PEO's ensured that the problem of children's safety was taken seriously by teachers, parents, and children. The input of male PEO's was seen as especially valuable to boys"*.
- *"Kids of this age tend to disregard what their parents say but when it comes from authority figures at school and involves police, they know that it has to be taken seriously"*.
- *"Although appreciation of all the PEO's was very evident, the hard work and enthusiasm of Senior Constable Ian McKittrick was especially commended by staff, parents and children. His outstanding work with children with learning problems was particularly appreciated"*.

One parent was appreciative of PEO input because she found that teachers "skipped the sensitive stuff" and missed out essential material on child sexual abuse, restricting information to dangerous strangers. Other comments included:

- "A good programme. Police input especially appreciated".
- "It's great. Kids don't always listen to their parents but if they get it from authority figures such as police and teachers, they realise that it's important".

12: WHY WE CANNOT RELY ON TEACHERS TO TEACH KOS

From time to time, it is suggested that KOS should be left to teachers and that they should be responsible for creating their own teaching resources without the help of the YES team and PEO's. In my long and extensive experience, this would result in the demise of the programme.

As mentioned previously, the South Australian Education Department and Catholic Education adopted the 1970's Protective Behaviours programme in 1985. It has never been revised or replaced despite the identification of substantial deficiencies by the author in 1989-90, by Dr. Bruce Johnson, (1995) and by the Department's own child protection curriculum officer at that time, Michael McVeity.

Initially (1985) some 16 child protection curriculum advisers were employed to train teachers and support schools in the State, Catholic and independent sectors. Cuts to funding and the low priority attached to child protection by bureaucrats ensured that these positions were targeted and by 2000, the position of the last child protection curriculum officer disappeared. There is now no-one responsible for training staff to use the programme, for supporting staff involved in teaching the programme, for updating the programme and ensuring that modules are taught consistently or for providing teaching resources. As a consequence, despite its designation as "core curriculum", child protection education in South Australian schools has virtually disappeared.

Our experience in South Australia is that teachers will not teach safety skills if they have to create their own materials. On page 2 of the Briggs and Hawkins Report *"Follow-up data on the effectiveness of Keeping Ourselves safe when used with children of 5-8 years"* (1991) it says:

"An evaluation of the Protective Behaviours programme used in South Australian schools showed that without the availability of prescribed teaching materials, teachers used the programme selectively and spasmodically (if at all) concentrating on safety in the classroom and playground. They avoided the 'sensitive areas' relating to the adult-child power differential and the child's right to reject and report sexual misbehaviour. When Australian children were interviewed one year after exposure to the programme, only 30% demonstrated the expected

knowledge associated with personal safety. Contributing factors included the lack of reinforcement, the absence of prescribed teaching materials to assist teachers with the difficult areas"....."New Zealand authorities learned from the mistakes of others. They made provision for strong support networks by providing specially trained police education officers to introduce the kit to teachers and parents. The officers then train school coordinators who, in turn, train and support staff and plan parent involvement. They (police) also provide developmentally appropriate resources to ensure that teachers know how to teach the more sensitive aspects of the programme".

Dr. Bruce Johnson (1995) surveyed 1400 teachers in South Australia.

- 20% of teachers said that they had never used the programme, identifying inadequate support as the main factor for their negligence;
- 62% of primary and 82.9% of secondary teachers who claimed to have taught the programme confessed that they had never mentioned inappropriate touching or sexual misbehaviour.
- More than half of the primary (53.7%) and 82.9% of the secondary teachers had never told children anything about reporting inappropriate behaviour
- 65% of primary and 83% of secondary teachers avoided mentioning physical violence, and about the same proportion had done nothing to develop children's problem solving skills (54% P: 83% S).

Reasons given for NOT teaching children that they should reject and report sexual touching were as follows:

- Too embarrassed : 40% Primary 22.2% Secondary
- Unsure how to tackle sensitive issues : 56.5% Primary 28.6% Secondary
- Parents might object (although they had never been consulted)
72.8% Primary 42.8% Secondary
- Worried that a student might disclose abuse if the programme was used
24.1% Primary 28.6% Secondary.

About a third of both groups demonstrated their ignorance of the nature of the child abuse problem by saying that the programme was unnecessary because their students were not abused. (Johnson 1995, p.5-6, 56) Johnson noted that "Medium to high level use of the programme was linked to the provision of school level support". Few secondary teachers were trained to use Protective Behaviours and few teachers from any sector participated in professional development workshops. In the meantime, parents thought that their children were being protected from sexual abuse when they were not. Lacking teacher support, the programme has fallen into disuse.

Given the litigious nature of present-day society, it is likely that before long, parents of abused children will sue schools and teachers for failing to use programmes conscientiously and failing to provide the essential information needed to stop sexual abuse. When there is civil action, teachers invariably protest that they were not adequately

trained. Australian Judges are rejecting this excuse saying that child sexual abuse has been prominent in the media for two decades and teachers should have taken more interest given that they have a duty of care.

13: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF PEO'S WERE REMOVED FROM KOS?

I can guarantee that programmes would disappear.

When the Education Department in New South Wales rejected Victoria Police's national marketing of *Protective Behaviours* in 1985, it was decided that curriculum staff would follow New Zealand's example and write their own programme. They produced kits for all levels of education including pre-school, special education and secondary. They even provided curriculum for parent and community education. The problem was that teachers were not trained to use them and, as a result, they are rarely used. There is no whole school approach or external support as there is in New Zealand. Because of this, it was decided that specialist teachers should be employed to go from school to school to ensure that the programme was taught consistently and that sensitive material was not missed out. I have since had contact with many teachers in New South Wales and have yet to find one who has had prior knowledge of child protection curriculum or has access to the programme.

As indicated, the 1985 South Australian programme has all but disappeared for want of training, materials and support. Teachers and school principals have not been sufficiently well educated about child abuse in general. This was confirmed in the handling of offences by students in some of the Zealand schools involved in our research.

Furthermore, secondary school students were convinced that PEO's (possibly with school nurse assistance) were the only people capable of delivering the programme effectively to adolescents.

They had no faith in the abilities or willingness of health and physical education teachers to discuss safety issues openly but confidentially and with any degree of understanding of present-day safety issues for young people in the 21st century.

14: PROSECUTIONS ARISING FROM KOS

I have received anecdotal evidence of the success of KOS since its introduction. Although it has not been possible to collect this information systematically, reports have been so numerous that there can be little doubt of the programme's ability to make changes in the lives of young people. I have received newspaper cuttings and correspondence relating to the following:

Late in 2001 the Commissioner of Police and I received letters from a father in Rotorua. He had been concerned that his daughter "was not herself" but he could not find the reason until she started KOS and was "empowered" (his word) to report inappropriate genital touching by a trusted family friend. Other children were involved and the offender was arrested and charged.

I also have several newspaper cuttings showing that rapists and molesters have been prosecuted as a result of KOS lessons (eg. Otago Daily Times June 20th 1998) ¹. Other examples are as follows:

- During the trials of the Intermediate KOS programme at Whangarei in 1986, children reported abuse shortly after the teacher had explained about the programme that was about to start the following week.
- A national TV item from Dunedin disclosed that a boy used the skills taught in KOS to keep himself and his younger sister safe from an approach to get in a stranger's car while walking home from school.
- A further TV item about a Christchurch girl who used the skills taught in KOS to escape from a stranger who knocked on her house door when she was at home alone.
- A Police Child Abuse Team asked their Police Education Officers to advise where they were teaching KOS so they could plan for an expected increase in reports from that area.
- The principal of a school in Auckland sent a letter narrating how the teaching of KOS encouraged a girl to report serious sexual abuse. In a letter to Owen Sanders, the principal pleaded with Police not to reduce the excellent service the Youth Education Service offers schools.
- I have also been told that just two weeks ago at the Internet Safety Group Conference in Auckland, the Commissioner of Police told the assembled audience of an incident "down South" where KOS persuaded another girl to report abuse and as a result the Police have made an arrest of a man involved in Internet child pornography.

¹Donald Raymond Liddington of Lower Hutt allegedly raped a preschool girl while on parole for other child rapes. The newspaper reported that, "The girl did not speak about what happened until a KOS lesson on touching".

I have always found it irritating that New Zealanders take their excellent Police programmes for granted. KOS and the Police Youth Education Service are envied around the world. Last December, Owen Sanders was invited to discuss the introduction of Police Education Officer positions and school programmes with South Australia's Commissioner of Police, Mal Hyde (I was present at the meeting). He was asked to share his knowledge with educators and police and filled a large theatre at his public address at Illinois State University. I know because I was there a year later. I also know that Australian police representative will be visiting YES staff later in the year. The State of Victoria has managed to create 30 positions in a half-hearted attempt to emulate New Zealand and impoverished South Australia is hoping for funding to expand the 2001 trial which involved one PEO for one school term.

There is certainly truth in the Biblical saying that a prophet is never recognised in his own country!

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The media confirms the very high incidence of all forms of child abuse in New Zealand. It would clearly be unwise to make any changes that reduced PEO contact with schools and programmes. My experiences show that, without them, KOS would gradually disappear because of the unreliability of teacher training, the fact that few teachers have sufficient knowledge and confidence to create their own programme materials and the fact that teachers and health coordinators need outside support to teach sensitive material. That is especially the case when teachers were also abuse victims.

My survey of all Police Education Officers in 2001 (in relation to Secondary KOS) suggested that there are too few officers trying to deliver too many programmes. Demand is greater than supply and, as a consequence, some programmes and some schools have been neglected. Secondary KOS falls into that category.

All children have the right to safety knowledge irrespective of the whim or hang-ups of their teachers or parents. Programmes have to be taught consistently and conscientiously and the best way of ensuring continuity is to have Police Education Officers working with teachers on the sensitive aspects that teachers tend to avoid. Thus, there should be more Police Education Officer contact, not less. To improve responses from school principals, there should be more professional development programmes on child abuse and child protection. Information sessions for parents are also vital but unless teachers contact them individually, only about one third will attend.

If increasing Police Education Officer time in schools means a transfer of funds from the Ministry of Education, so be it. But given the publicity relating to child abuse in New Zealand, I suggest that now is the time to improve child protection programmes, not diminish them.

Many parents are unaware that KOS exists and others ask why it is not available in their children's schools. I suggest that the reasons for schools' non-involvement should be researched. Have they been overlooked by Police Education Officers or have complacent parents on controlling boards or health coordinators rejected it? Certainly, given that they cannot meet all needs, it is possible that some Police Education Officers will prefer to go to schools that welcome them than have to persuade those with no apparent interest.

Every effort should be made to ensure that Keeping Ourselves Safe is available to all New Zealand children.

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