

Professor Alexis Jay OBE
Chair
Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
PO Box 72289
London
SW1P 9LF



MandateNow

9th May 2017

Please destroy earlier version of this letter

Dear Professor Jay,

Seminar 12.4.17 – The Presentation by Professor Lorraine Radford

We have read in detail Professor Radford's response to our letter of 25 April to Professor Jay. The key point concerning mandatory reporting made in Professor Radford's reply is as follows: "we found a lack of evidence on impact to support or reject mandatory reporting as so few researchers, Mathews, Ju Lee & Norman included, have actually looked at the outcomes for children. Indeed on page 73 of the paper it is said:

The study does not explore individual case characteristics and their outcomes by other methodologies. Accordingly, it is not possible for this study to draw firm conclusions about the quality of these CSA reports and their outcomes in lived experience, whether or not they were screened in, and substantiated after investigation (Mathews, Ju Lee & Norman 2016, p73."

Professor Radford seems to be arguing that interventions by children's services, following investigation and substantiation of a report, do not result in improved outcomes for children. If this is the argument, then a consequence is that one of the following statements must also be true.

Either:

1. Reports specifically from mandated reporters, even though they have been investigated and substantiated by children's services, are unique in that the resulting interventions provide no improvement in outcomes for children.
2. Interventions by children's services following a substantiated report *generally* do not result in improved outcomes for children.

Neither option seems remotely plausible, and neither is supported by any evidence from elsewhere in Professor Radford's report. Overall, Professor Radford appears to reach conclusions that are both opposite to and far less persuasive than the conclusions of Professor Mathews' article which were based on much stronger quantitative evidence.

Professor Radford in her reply also-quotes from page 200 of her report:

“Opinion is mixed among academics and practitioners about the need for mandatory reporting, with concerns about unhelpful over reporting creating additional pressure on services and harm to families put through unnecessary investigations (Wallace and Bunting 2007; Gilbert et al, 2008). (Radford et al 2017, p200)”

The substantive point seems to be the implication that an investigation is “unnecessary” if it fails to result in a substantiation of sexual abuse. However this can only be established in retrospect after an investigation has been completed. The decision whether to carry out an investigation by definition has to take place starting from the evidence available at the time, when the investigation’s outcome is unknown and might not result in a substantiation of the original report.

A small proportion of investigations into allegations do prove groundless, and it is understood that some harm to families may occur as a result. But this has to be balanced against the harm to abused children from evidence not being followed up and interventions failing to occur. It is instructive that the paragraph Professor Radford chose to quote was concerned with “unnecessary investigations” as if social services have ever had the resources to investigate trivial cases, and when there is evidence that the great majority of abused children never come to the attention of children’s services at all.

We think it is worth re-iterating our reference to Mathews’ statements concerning the inherent unreliability of treating the proportion of substantiated reports as a measure of success of any change in policy. These statements were in turn based on prior research that Mathews referenced. Furthermore in a 2014 Report ¹ Mathews states:

“[An] argument asserts that where reports are not founded, investigations of those reports constitute an unjustified and distressing intrusion into family life. Yet, this argument has also been disputed by others, and is premised on an assumption that only substantiated reports are ‘good’ reports; an assumption that for many is not borne out by the evidence¹²⁴.”

(see Mathews’ report for the footnote referenced in this extract)

Finally, Professor Radford does not suggest any alternative measure to assist these children and identify their suffering, leaving the overall problem of hidden child sexual abuse completely intact. If the Children’s Commissioner is correct in her conclusion that 7 out of 8 abused children do not come to the attention of children’s services, then it is essential that referrals increase from Regulated Activities, the largest of which is education.

It needs to be noted that staff working in Regulated Activities need to perform two key safeguarding functions:

- Keeping children safe within the setting from abuses that might arise there.
- Acting as ‘sentinel’ reporters of suspected abuse (on reasonable grounds) that might be occurring elsewhere, such as within the family.

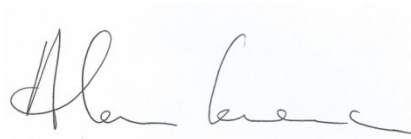
Since it is clearly inappropriate for Regulated Activities to attempt to perform their own investigations using staff untrained for the purpose, it follows that additional reports to children's services will occur from *any* initiative to increase the detection of child sex abuse. For this to be characterised as "unhelpful" both in Professor Radford's original paper and her subsequent reply to our letter is quite shocking.

We look forward to your reply.

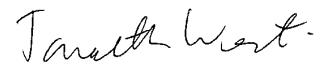
Yours Sincerely,



Tom Perry
Founder
[Mandate Now](#)



Alana Lawrence



Jonathan West

cc. (i) Martin Smith Solicitor the IICSA (ii) Professor Lorraine Radford

ⁱ Mandatory reporting laws for child sexual abuse in Australia : A legislative history | Report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse | Associate Professor Ben Mathews | 2014.