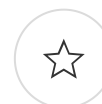
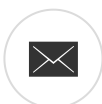


COMMENT

AUGUST 21 2019, 12:01AM, THE TIMES

# Remaining silent about child abuse can't be an option

TOM PERRY



Share

Save

**I**t's all different now" is the default refrain from those who today are responsible for safeguarding in institutional settings such as education, sport, healthcare and faith. The

time spent with their families.

But the assertion begs the question: how is it all different now when today there is still no statutory obligation on “professionals” working in positions of trust to report known or suspected abuse of a child to the authorities? It seems governments are prepared to rely merely only on an “expectation” that “professionals” will refer such concerns.

This arrangement is demonstrably unreliable. Data shows that when mandatory reporting is introduced to these settings, almost double the number of children are placed into safety who would otherwise be left to an unknown fate.

The majority of jurisdictions around the world have some form of mandatory reporting law — 72 per cent in Asia, 77 per cent in Africa, 86 per cent in Europe and 90 per cent of the Americas.

What is the purpose of a statutory requirement to report suspicions that a child is being abused?

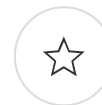
- To make professionals report suspicions in instances in which they would not normally do so;
- To protect those who do report suspicions made in good faith which are not then validated in law;
- To gain redress for injuries sustained after a professional had been made aware of suspicions or problems, but after they have chosen not to take the matter further.

You'll notice how relevant these points are to the child abuse perpetrated at Celtic Boys Club and Chelsea FC. What possibility is there of holding anyone to account for failing to report concerns when shamefully there's no law to prosecute those who remain silent?

After the extension of mandatory reporting for teachers in New South Wales, Australia, there was a rise in the percentage of referrals from teachers and they accurately detected the type of abuse 54 per cent of the time. This indicates that mandatory

More recent data from multiple jurisdictions reveals that well-designed mandatory reporting supports staff and benefits children in their care. It is considered a vital component of functioning safeguarding. So why does the government persist with “discretionary reporting” in complex settings for which there is a dearth of supporting evidence?

---

[Economics](#)[Chelsea Football Club](#)[Football](#)[Australia](#)[Africa](#)[Share](#)[Save](#)

---