

## **MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

**10 August 2011**

### **Bravehearts Leads National Campaign in the Fight Against Child Sexual Assault** ***White Balloon Day - 7 September 2011 - Child Protection Week 5-11 Sept***

White Balloon Day on September 7 (during Child Protection Week 4 –11 September) is the initiative of Bravehearts Inc. and the only national annual campaign taking the fight against child sexual assault to every corner of Australia with the vision of making Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

In Australia, 59,000 children are sexually assaulted each year. With an estimated one in five sexually assaulted before their 18th birthday, Bravehearts' *White Balloon Day* aims to engage the support of the nation to prevent child sexual assault while raising vital funds to deliver Bravehearts' unique specialised child protection programs.

Recognised as the leading independent child protection agency in Australia, Bravehearts' charter addresses all facets relating to child sexual assault including prevention, specialist therapy, support, education, research, advocacy, legislative reforms and online resources - all make a remarkable, quantifiable and positive difference in the protection of Australia's children against sexual assault.

Following the inaugural *White Balloon Day* in Queensland in 1997, statewide awareness resulted in an unprecedented 514 per cent increase in disclosures of sexual assault to the Queensland Police. Fifteen years on, Bravehearts has expanded its programs and extended its reach:, aiming to protect and educate more kids and increase the national reporting statistics in every Australian state and territory.

Bravehearts' Founder and Executive Director Hetty Johnston said, "On behalf of Aussie kids everywhere, in our mission to stop child sexual assault on a national scale we are dedicated to engaging all Australians in the fight against child sexual assault and at the same time, encourage victims to come forward and report these crimes.

"Through *White Balloon Day* we also aim to educate and empower children to identify inappropriate behaviour and to tell someone when they feel unsafe. Importantly, we aim to promote child protection through educating parents and adults in ways we can all protect our kids from harm," Ms Johnston said.

Paying tribute to the work of Bravehearts, Australian Federal Police Commander Grant Edwards said, "There is not a child in this nation that has not benefited from the tireless work of Bravehearts Inc.. Bravehearts has forged a movement for change in how the issue of child sexual assault is dealt with by government, the judiciary and the community at large.

"Since its inception in 1997, Bravehearts has continued its good work in moving this taboo subject out of the shadows and into the light while providing crucial support for victims and their families."

In the 2010/11 financial year, Bravehearts' qualified therapists provided more than 2000 individual counselling sessions, responded to 1500+ crisis calls from Australia and overseas, and made approximately 200 advocacy representations. Bravehearts education teams also deliver the '*Ditto Keep Safe Adventure*' education program in multiple regions throughout Australia. The effectiveness of this valuable in-school child protection program is demonstrated in its popularity with the program often booked out a year in advance.

Thanks to community support, so far this year Bravehearts' education teams have presented the *Ditto* program to around 35,000 students and will reach more than 50,000 children before the end of the year.

In addition to raising awareness, *White Balloon Day* is also Bravehearts' principle fundraising initiative and in 2011, they aim to raise \$500,000 to enable Bravehearts to continue its essential work in education, advocacy and support services to protect all Australian children from child sexual assault.

"Bravehearts believes communities in every corner of Australia have a responsibility to get involved in protecting their children, and we're inviting all Australians - individuals, businesses and communities to get behind *White Balloon Day* to join us in saying NO to child sexual assault.

"By working together, we can help give a voice to those touched by this issue, raise vital funds to support our programs that educate, empower and protect Aussie kids and help make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child," Ms Johnston said.

Angry Anderson AM, Ambassador for White Balloon Day appealed to all Australians to support this national campaign saying, "Every Australian child deserves the right to feel safe and every adult has a responsibility to make sure we do everything in our power to protect our kids from harm."

"Come on Australia, let's do what we can to protect our kids. We can all get behind White Balloon Day, say NO to child sexual assault and raise vital funds to help educate, empower and protect our kids!

"Please support White Balloon Day and register to host a White fundraising event, wear White on White Balloon Day - Wednesday 7 September, purchase White Balloons and key rings or make a donation at our website or any branch of Bendigo Bank, and enable Bravehearts to help kids in need," said Angry.

"As a survivor, I know only too well the consequences of child sexual assault... Please join me in the fight to protect all of our kids from the pain caused by sexual assault,.. And be part of the solution not part of the problem..." he said.

Visit [www.whiteballoonday.com.au](http://www.whiteballoonday.com.au) to register your event or for more information on White Balloon Day or child protection please call Bravehearts on 1800 BRAVE1 (272 831).

**[www.whiteballoonday.com.au](http://www.whiteballoonday.com.au) - Freecall Crisis Line: 1800 BRAVE 1 (272 831)**

**ENDS**

**We are able to offer multiple interview and photo opportunities including:**

- ♥ Hetty Johnston - Bravehearts' Founder and Executive Director
- ♥ Grant Edwards - Australian Federal Police Commander
- ♥ Angry Anderson - 2011 White Balloon Day Ambassador
- ♥ Simone Buchanan - 2011 White Balloon Day Ambassador
- ♥ Health and welfare experts on child protection in all states and territories including psychologists and police
- ♥ Case studies – survivors stories
- ♥ Media and special events will be taking place in all states and territories during Child Protection Week



**Contact Insight Communications for more information, photographs or to arrange an interview.**

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## Journalist Notes

In a research study commissioned by Bravehearts Inc and conducted by psychologist Nicole Barrett it was determined that ignorance of child sexual assault is frequently documented as one of the principal factors inhibiting its prevention and prolonging the suffering and distress of its many victims.

**The powerful role of the media**, in forming belief systems and attitudes toward sexuality and sexual practices, is widely recognised. The NSW Child Sexual Abuse Task Force support this view and argue that the benefits of raising community awareness about the problem of child sexual assault, such as the production of pamphlets, posters, displays, film and video collections, TV and Radio community service announcements cannot be overestimated.<sup>1</sup>

With the media's support for White Balloon Day, together we can make a major impact on preventing child sexual assault.

1 NSW Woods Royal Commission Aug 1997 Vol V pg 1202

### Statistics on Child Sexual Assault in Australia

- ♥ 59,000 Australian children are sexually assaulted in Australia each year <sup>2</sup>
  - ♥ An estimated one in five Australian children will be sexually assaulted before their 18th birthday
  - ♥ In 95% of cases, the offender is known to the child and is a relative or a trusted friend
  - ♥ Only 5% of child sexual assault cases are "stranger danger"
  - ♥ One in three child sexual offenders are adolescent <sup>3</sup>
2. The number of children under 18 (according to the ABS) and applied by the 1 in 5 statistic  
3. Bagley, C. (1995), Child sexual abuse and mental health in adolescents and adults

### The Effects of Child Sexual Assault on Individuals and the Community

Child sexual assault could trigger the development of future violent behaviour resulting in criminal convictions, psychosomatic responses, psychiatric disorders, long-lasting emotional problems; youth suicide, regression, sleeping and eating disorders, lack of self esteem; nightmares, self-hatred and mutilation, promiscuous behaviour and aggression. A wide variety of later effects have been pointed out including sexual difficulties, inability to form lasting relationships, a serious lack of self-confidence, marital problems and poor parenting skills.<sup>4</sup>

A study of child sexual assault victims found:

- ♥ 32% had attempted suicide and 43% had thought about suicide <sup>5</sup>
- ♥ In Australia, suicide now claims more men annually than the national road toll
- ♥ In 2000, 1860 men and 503 women committed suicide <sup>6</sup>
- ♥ Some 70% of psychiatric patients are known to have been sexually assaulted as children <sup>7</sup>
- ♥ 80 to 85 per cent of women in Australian prisons have been victims of incest or other forms of abuse <sup>8</sup>
- ♥ 70% of all prisoners were assaulted as children <sup>9</sup>
- ♥ On the basis of therapeutic experience Ross (1995) suggests that only approximately 5 percent of victims go on to become abusers <sup>10</sup>

4. Waters & Kelk, 1991. Oates & Tong 1987; Australian Institute of Criminology Paper on Paedophilia – Effect on Victims  
5. A study of Suicide Risk Following Child Sexual Abuse – Angela Plunkett, BA, MHP, FRACMA. FRACP, FAFPHM, DCH, Sandra Shrimpton, BA, GDACP, and Patrick Parkinson, MA, LL.M. – Ambulatory Paediatrics: Vol. 1 No.5, pp. 262-266  
6. Children's Commission of Qld, Paedophilia in Qld Report, 5 August 1997  
7. Children's Commissions' report into paedophilia August 5, 1997  
8. Volume 19 (2) of the 1994 Alternative Law Journal cited in Commonwealth Senator Andrew Murray Hansard 19 June 2002 Page 2061  
9. Children's Commissions' report into paedophilia August 5, 1997  
10. Managing Sex Offenders, NSW Child Protection Council 2000

## The Economic Costs to the Australian Community

Research, funded by a Criminology Research Council Grant, conservatively estimates the tangible cost to society of child sexual assault to be in excess of \$180,000 per child.<sup>11</sup> At a national level, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) conservatively estimates 40,000 Australian children will be sexually assaulted each year.<sup>12</sup> - That's \$7.2 Billion dollars annually. In South Australia, the Department of Human Services conservatively estimated the cost of child abuse and neglect in 1995-96 to be \$354 million. Over the same period, that figure is more than the State earned from the sale of both its wine (\$318 million) and its wool (\$239 million).<sup>13</sup>

11. Professor Freda Briggs - A cost-benefit analysis of child sex-offender treatment programs for male offenders in correctional services; Child Protection Research Group; University of South Australia March 1999

12. ABCI

13. Commonwealth Senator Andrew Murray Hansard 19 June 2002 Page 2061

## Indicators of Child Sexual Assault for Parents & Teachers

As children often lack the words to describe sexual assault, they find it exceptionally difficult to disclose. The more severe the degree of abuse, the less likely it is that the child/young person will disclose. The fear of a negative reaction and possible punishment can also stop children from speaking out.

Children may try to subtly open the conversation by asking "Do you like so and so?... I don't" or "I've got a secret" but there are a number of physical and behavioural symptoms that indicate a child or young person may have been harmed.

**While physical and behavioural symptoms should be viewed as a sign that something may be worrying the child, it should NOT be automatically assumed that abuse is occurring.** By talking to the child, this may reveal something quite innocent so be sure to speak with the child before making accusations.

### What to Look For

Parents, teachers, carers, child protection workers, counsellors and so on, all need to know the symptoms of child sexual assault so if there are significant changes in behaviour, increased fears, or physical symptoms, they can talk to the child to discuss what they might be feeling.

Common Indicators in Children	Common Indicators in Offenders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Fear of being hurt during nappy change or dressing</li> <li>♥ Loss of concentration</li> <li>♥ Development of eating disorders</li> <li>♥ Fear of being alone with a particular person</li> <li>♥ Sexual themes in artwork, stories, play etc.</li> <li>♥ Showing a knowledge of sexual behaviour beyond their years</li> <li>♥ Bedwetting or soiling after being toilet trained</li> <li>♥ "Acting out" behaviours; for example, aggression, destructive behaviours, truanting behaviour</li> <li>♥ "Acting in" behaviours; for example, withdrawal from friends, depression</li> <li>♥ Vaginal, penile or anal soreness, discharge or bleeding</li> <li>♥ Problems with friends and schoolwork</li> <li>♥ Vague symptoms of illness such as headache or tummy ache</li> <li>♥ Self-harming</li> <li>♥ Inappropriate displays of affection or sexualised play</li> <li>♥ Over attention to adults of a particular sex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Paying particular interest to a child</li> <li>♥ Isolating a child from other children</li> <li>♥ Engaging in inappropriate/unwanted close physical contact with a child</li> <li>♥ More interested in children than adults</li> <li>♥ Suspicious behaviour in relation to children (watching/following/photos/gifts)</li> <li>♥ Often has a special 'child friend'</li> <li>♥ Encourages secrets in children</li> <li>♥ Links sexuality and aggression in language or behaviour</li> <li>♥ Makes reference to or makes fun of children's bodies</li> <li>♥ Describes children with sexual words</li> <li>♥ Seems unclear about what is appropriate with children and what is not</li> <li>♥ Has an interest in sexual fantasies involving children</li> <li>♥ Looks at or downloads child pornography</li> <li>♥ Asks adult partners to actor dress like a child or teenager during sexual activity</li> </ul>

## White Balloon Day

*White Balloon Day* was established to prevent child sexual assault in Australia. It is Bravehearts' signature national event and in 2011 marks the 15th consecutive year as a national day of awareness and recognition that offers support for the victims of child sexual assault.

*White Balloon Day* is also the principle fundraising initiative. In 2011, we aim to raise \$500,000 to support their essential programs enabling Bravehearts to continue to educate, empower and protect all Aussie kids.

*White Balloon Day 2011 is proudly sponsored by the Federal Government under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.*

### 2011 *White Balloon Day* Aims to Educate, Empower and Protect Our Kids

- ♥ **Educate** – the most important focus of *White Balloon Day* is education. This year, there will be a major focus on raising awareness and expanding the distribution of the Bravehearts Inc. education materials to parents, schools and children.
- ♥ **Empower** – with the tools learned from Bravehearts' education program, children can identify inappropriate behaviour and learn valuable strategies for what to do if they feel unsafe.
- ♥ **Protect** – to give everyone in the community a sense of responsibility to protect children. This message is primarily targeted at parents who should be encouraged to not only protect their own children, but their children's friends and children in their community who may not have the same level of support at home.

### How Australians Can Help

- ♥ Register a 'White' event at home or work and help raise awareness and funds. Events may include a morning or afternoon tea, a sausage sizzle or a fundraising car wash.
- ♥ Purchase merchandise including white balloons/keyrings etc at our website or at your local Bendigo Bank branch
- ♥ Create a 'Wear White Wednesday' 7 September and SAY NO to child sexual assault
- ♥ Donate to support the vital work of Bravehearts in protecting Aussie kids

### How The Funds You Raise Can Help Aussie Kids

- ♥ \$100 will protect 10 school-aged children through Bravehearts' school education program – '*Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure*'
- ♥ \$50 will give one counselling session to a child in need
- ♥ \$25 will give support for a parent/guardian with Bravehearts' professional counselling team
- ♥ Provide online access to information and support materials for children and adults affected by child sexual assault
- ♥ Reduce waiting lists for children and families in need of counselling and support

## Bravehearts Inc.

By consistently searching to distinguish child sexual assault from other forms of child abuse and neglect, Bravehearts has brought the issue into focus. As a result of its persistence, this distinction was finally acknowledged and supported by the Commonwealth of Australia and its COAG partners through Outcome Six of the National Framework for the Protection of Australia's Children 2009-2020.

Bravehearts' work in the areas of specialist therapy, support, education, research, legislative reform and the provision of online resources has made a remarkable, quantifiable and positive difference in protecting everyone's children. Our proven programs are highly effective, our knowledge is unsurpassed and our commitment to achieve our vision is unbridled.

Our **Mission** is to stop child sexual assault in our society.

Our **Vision** is to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

### Bravehearts - Preventing Child Sexual Assault

- ♥ Educating kids about personal safety not only increases protective factors, but enhances resilience and encourages a positive sense of self
- ♥ School-based personal safety programs play a vital role in preventing child sexual assault, equipping children with the knowledge and skills they need to identify unsafe or risky situations, giving them an understanding of their rights to protect themselves and their own body
- ♥ In 2011, Bravehearts' 'Ditto Keep Safe Adventure' education teams will have presented the in-school program in multiple regions throughout Australia reaching and protecting more than 50,000 children
- ♥ As a direct result of the 'Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure' education program, Bravehearts receives between 4 and 8 phone calls a week relating to concerns about child sexual assault
- ♥ In the 2010/11 financial year, Bravehearts' provided more than 2000 individual counselling sessions, responded to 1500+ crisis calls from Australia and overseas, and made approximately 200 advocacy representations
- ♥ If you feel that yourself or a member of your family requires counselling, please contact Bravehearts' experienced and qualified counsellors on 1800 BRAVE1 (272 831)

### Bravehearts' Programs and Services Include:

- ♥ Specialist counselling for children who have been or are at risk of child sexual assault and support for non-offending family members
- ♥ Freecall Crisis Line: 1800 BRAVE 1 (272 831).- Telephone support for adult survivors of child sexual assault
- ♥ Professional advocacy and support
- ♥ Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure – A live school-based personal safety education program for children
- ♥ Resources for families and survivors, including interactive materials and workshops
- ♥ Research and lobbying
- ♥ Community awareness campaigns
- ♥ Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme – SADS
- ♥ Online resources for schools, individuals, families and community groups

## Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Education Program – It's Fun! It's Safe! It Works!

The Ditto Keep Safe Adventure Education Program is recognised as a most significant advancement in child protection with children demonstrating sound improvements in their awareness and understanding of safety behaviours and retaining information about personal safety. After participating in Ditto's program, children are able to identify 'yes' and 'no' feelings, private parts, warning signs and what to do in the event that they felt unsafe. Importantly, it teaches children to "run and tell someone you trust".

In a detailed evaluation from psychologist Nicole Barrett, the effectiveness of the Bravehearts unique child protection program demonstrated unequivocally that the program is effective in reducing child sexual assault and its harmful effects by up to 50%, providing convincing evidence to support the benefits of this nationwide-wide initiative.

### Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Education Program – How it works

The Ditto Keep Safe Adventure Education Program teaches children basic principles and the tools to stay safe. The findings in the study by Nicole Barrett, Psychologist verify and strengthen Bravehearts resolve that education and prevention is an effective strategy to reduce the prevalence of child sexual assault in Australia.

The program developed in collaboration with child protection experts, academics and professionals from Australia and abroad, is specifically designed to teach children the skills to keep safe in a non-confronting and fun way. It is comprised of three key elements:

- ♥ Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show
- ♥ Ditto's Keep Safe Activity Book
- ♥ Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure CD–Rom

## The Value of Bravehearts in Protecting Aussie Kids Testimonials

Congratulations to Bravehearts on the success of *White Balloon Day* in raising awareness of the critical importance of protecting children against sexual assault. Congratulations also to all at Bravehearts for your ongoing work educating, empowering and protecting Australia's children and adult survivors of child sexual assault through a very effective and impressive range of programs. Your mission to stop child sexual assault in our society resonates with all Australians.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009, is providing the foundation for national reform, with a focus on promoting the safety and wellbeing of children. Building on this foundation, we can aspire to achieve your vision of making Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

### **The Hon. Julia Gillard – Australian Prime Minister (2011)**

"I congratulate Hetty and Bravehearts for the work they have done and their determination to break the silence on child abuse throughout Australian and the world. Bravehearts gives hope to survivors of abuse."

### **His Excellency The Hon. Kim Beazley - Former Federal Labor Leader (2005)**

"I imagine you have received letters from the many people who support your work or who just want to put a stop to child abuse... I wanted to offer my own personal words of support to you... I look forward to your ongoing involvement in the activism and debate around child safety."

### **Peter Beattie - Former Queensland Premier (2005)**

“Bravehearts was instrumental in Queensland in pushing for the CMC Inquiry into sexual assaults and other forms of abuse of children in foster care. As a consequence, issues of child sexual assault are now being taken more seriously than ever before and governments are under greater scrutiny to act. More and more victims are now speaking out.”

**The Hon. Lawrence Springborg – Queensland Deputy Opposition Leader (2005)**

“Congratulations on the development and production of the interactive CD which tackles the very difficult and complex issue of children’s personal safety. I commend Bravehearts for its endeavours to address the issues of children’s safety and feelings in the context of child protection and broader public safety.”

**Robin Sullivan – Former Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People (2003)**

“In terms of levels of reporting of child sexual assault, in terms of affirmation and acknowledgment of survivors and in terms of heightened public awareness, *White Balloon Day* has been a very significant success.”

**Jim Soorley – Former Brisbane Lord Mayor (2001)**

“Bravehearts offers a valuable service to the community in providing both support and advocacy for those affected by sexual abuse and contributes, in a very constructive way, to the provision of a rational, uniform and supportive framework for dealing with the problem.”

**Tim Carmody SC – Former Queensland Crime Commissioner (2001)**

## **Hetty Johnston - Founder and Executive Director of Bravehearts Inc**

Hetty Johnston is the Founder and Executive Director of Bravehearts Inc, Australia’s leading child protection advocate. A born lobbyist, Hetty is a woman of passion and determination who is breaking the silence surrounding the issue of paedophilia within media, families, schools and the general community.

Hetty established Bravehearts in 1997. Bravehearts is an organisation whose purpose is to provide therapy, support and advocacy services to survivors of child sexual assault, and to increase prevention - by way of education and awareness - to both adults and children.

In 2005, Hetty was announced as a finalist for the 2006 Australian of the Year Awards – she is the recipient of two Australian Lawyers Alliance Civil Justice Awards (2003,2004) and was named a finalist in the 2008 Suncorp Queenslander of the Year Awards.

In early 2009, Hetty was recognised as one of approximately 70 outstanding leaders throughout the world, receiving the prestigious annual Toastmasters International Communication and Leadership award.

She has authored her auto-biography, *‘In the Best Interests of the Child’*, and has been a contributing author to various books including *‘Crime on my Mind’* and *‘Woman on Top’*.

Hetty’s achievements include:

- Chaired the Queensland Child Protection Week Committee for three years
- Held a position on the Board of NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)
- Held a position on the Board with ASCA (Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse)
- Sat as Chair for the Endeavour Foundation’s ‘Abuse Prevention and Response Committee’
- Recently sat on the 2008 Federal Government’s Working Party on a ‘National Approach to Child Protection’
- Currently sits on the Federal Governments working party on Cyber-Safety

Hetty works with government and non-government agencies on legislative reform, submissions, lobbying and research to improve child protection and political accountability in Australia.

## Commander Grant Edwards – Australian Federal Police

Grant joined the AFP in 1985 and was initially posted to Sydney before spending periods in Newcastle, Canberra and three years as a Police Liaison Officer in Los Angeles, USA. He has enjoyed a very diverse career working in fields such as airport policing, family law, international drug trafficking, major organised crime human trafficking, child exploitation and people smuggling.

In 2006 He was promoted to the rank of Commander as Manager Criminal Intelligence Collection where he was responsible for leading a number of key areas including the AFP's undercover and human source collection programs.

In January 2008 Grant was posted to Timor Leste in a multi faceted role as Security Advisor to the Secretary of State for Security within the Government of Timor Leste and responsible for managing the enhanced Timor Leste Police Development Program (TLPDP) and the AFP's United Nations commitment (UNMIT) in Timor-Leste.

Grant is presently the Manager of the AFP's High Tech Crime Operations Cyber Crime Operations encompassing child protection operations, cyber crime investigations and crime prevention.

Grant holds a Diploma in Environmental Management, a Bachelor of Arts (ANU) majoring in Anthropology, Australian History and Indigenous Studies and post graduate qualifications in leadership and policing studies through the Australian Institute of Police Management and Charles Sturt University. He is a graduate of the FBI Law Enforcement Senior Executive Program and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.