Child safety in a post COVID-19 world

Prof. Daryl Higgins and Douglas Russell

Institute of Child Protection Studies

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E daryl.higgins@acu.edu.au
W www.acu.edu.au/icps
T @ACU_ICPS @HigginsDaryl
L daryl-higgins-57390115
L linkedin.com/company/institute-of-child-protection-studies
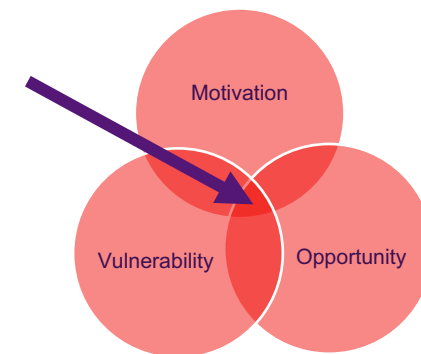
Play by the Rules Think Tank Presentation

Prevention– based on knowledge of causes and contributing factors

Child sexual abuse occurs at the intersection of:

- motivation (of a potential offender)
- vulnerability (of a potential victim)
- Opportunity

Prevention means addressing the preconditions that facilitate abuse at each of these levels.

Create and support conditions of safety within families, organisations and communities.

REFLECTION: How does 'culture' affect opportunity within my organisation? How does COVID-19 affect risks, or the ability to mitigate them?

Sports-specific prevalence

One large-scale study of sexual abuse in Australian organised sports examined the prevalence and long-term effects of sexual abuse in 370 adult Australian athletes representing either elite athletes (for example, on an Australian national team or funded by the Olympic committee) or a regional sample of club athletes (Leahy, Pretty, and Tenenbaum, 2002).

- 13% of females and 6% of males reported experiencing abuse in the context of their sports participation.

Sports-specific risk factors

Cultural aspects of sports programs have been identified as contributors to the risk of child sexual abuse for children and present barriers to the prevention and reporting of sexual abuse (Kaufman et al. 2016, 2019):

- gender stereotypes; code of silence; good-of-the-team; victim-blaming; power of the coach

- emphasis within some sports on power, aggression, strength and competition (normalisation of violence)

- a culture that might allow a variety of bullying, harassment or intimidation to occur (for example, due to homophobia, sexism or more subtle forms of gender stereotyping) (Higgins, 2013)

- adults within sporting organisations are acting 'in loco parentis'

- travel

- hands-on nature of many skill development approaches to coaching

- locker room/showers

- physical layout of facilities (isolation)

- amplified if there's an absence of appropriate policies to address these

- opportunities for grooming – of participants, and their parents/families

- families: changes during COVID-19 lock down, and heightened risk of physical punishment/abuse; low visibility from other potentially protective adults

- closed institutions – a key theme from the Royal Commission

Solutions for organisations

- enhanced safety training – knowledge not just about how to respond, but also about how to identify risks, to support and implement prevention approaches, and to detect (and interrupt) potential grooming behaviour

- improved screening and supervision of employees and volunteers (not just working with children checks)

- creating a stronger safety climate in youth sports

- prioritising the voice of children and young people, and involving them in prevention efforts [see slides 8 & 9]

- increasing awareness of risks in other environments (e.g., the home) and being a source of support and safety – facilitating getting help

- identifying risks and mitigating (situational prevention approach) [see next slide]

Situational crime prevention

- focuses on the factors that enable child sexual abuse to occur in organisations
- contrasts to strategies focused on 'weeding out' potential offenders, and the limitations of pre-employment screening.
- aims to remove excuses for the harm of children
- increases the level of difficulty for someone to offend
- reduces the appeal of the crime
- reduces the vulnerability of the child
- fosters organisational cultures where all adults take an active role in identifying and responding to risks to children's safety

FOR IDEAS ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/Situational crime prevention

INSTITUTE OF CHILD PROTECTION STUDIES

Applying the situational prevention model

Steps to reducing risks

1. Conduct Initial Risk Assessment

2. Confirm key risks with stakeholders (leaders, workers, parents, and particularly children & young people themselves) – including. frequency/severity

3. Link risks to risk-reduction and prevention strategies

4. Prioritise risks

5. Implement proposed risk-reduction and prevention strategies

6. Ongoing monitoring

Based on Kaufman et al. (2010)

REFLECTION: What's the risk you think you might find and prioritise from your risk assessment?

Why hear from young people?

- Young people have different concerns and different ways of exploring and understanding experiences (Moore et al., 2015).

- Evidence suggests that the promotion of young people as able and competent research participants improves both the quality and integrity of research into the lives of young people (Einarsdóttir, 2007).

- Children and young people can identify issues that adult participants may not consider, as well as being empowered through their involvement in research related to their real and perceived needs (Harcourt & Einarsdóttir, 2011).

Why hear from young people?

Limited research re: children's voice related to safety, particularly to child sexual abuse prevention/responses.

Current research tells us that:

- children and parents often have differing views (Osofsky, 1997)

- research often takes an adult-centric preconceived notion of what safety means (Collins, 2001)

- children relate safety to relationships, control over environments and empowerment (Moore et al., 2015)

The Children's Safety Survey

1. **The Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) Survey**
   - Child Informed Org Safety Climate
   - Sense of Safety*
   - Confidence in Adults*
   - Barriers to Help Seeking*

*Young people watch an ***animated scenario*** regarding an ***unsafe situation with an adult*** and again with an ***unsafe situation regarding a peer***.

(Moore et al., 2015; 2016)

2. **The Child Health Utility 9 Dimension (CHU 9D)**
   - Measures health-related quality of life of children and young
   - Currently used in over 190 research projects

3. **The Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ)**
   - Developed by Robert Goodman (1997)
   - Measures 5 factors of wellbeing
   - Cited in over 4000 articles
   - Used in Growing up in Aust. study

Safe kids and young people survey

This survey aims to support youth-servicing organisations to self-assess, understand and address their safeguarding issues.

Explore project

Please hover camera over the QR code to link to survey prospectus

The **Children's Safety Survey** measures children and young people's perceptions of safety. It gives you an opportunity to hear directly from children about how safe they feel in your organisation by measuring the following:
- perceptions of safety
- confidence in adults and in your organisation to prevent and respond to their concerns related to child sexual abuse and other forms of harm
- barriers that restrict attempts to seek help.

Example scenario

Karen is in the local sports team and is hoping to be selected for an upcoming competition. Her coach, James, tells her that she isn't good enough and sometimes makes fun of her in front of others. She really respects James but sometimes feels uncomfortable when he remarks about her body and touches her when he is correcting her mistakes. She thinks that she might be paranoid, but he says things like "come on, I want you to succeed so I have to show you what you need to improve". Then he shrugs and says, "If you don't want to make the team then it's OK, I'll find someone else to coach".

Example video scenario

https://youtu.be/Brf0_2nsuig

Safeguarding children portal

The Safeguarding Children and Young People portal links organisations to resources, training and up-to-date research, helping them create an environment that's transparent and accountable for keeping children safe.

Visit the portal

Please hover your phone camera over the QR code to link to Portal website

The **ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal** provides a range of resources and tools to support professionals and workers who provide care or support to children and young people.

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au

Situational Crime Prevention

This article by Sam Morley and Prof Daryl Higgins from ICPS discusses the role of situational crime prevention strategies to preventing child sexual abuse in institution.

The gift of childhood

This stimulus paper by Catholic Education South Australia supports the reflection of individuals, schools and other organisations on the gift of children and childhood.

Promoting Safety from Sexual Abuse and Harm in Community Service Organisations

This guide by Dr Tim Moore presents facts about child sexual abuse and activities for staff and volunteers to work through.

Tools and resources for how to support children through child-centred approaches

The tools and resources can be used by services and practitioners to build on current work to work with and support children.

Protective Participation: The Voices of Young People on Safety

Including children and young people can be difficult when discussing sensitive issues. This tool can help organisations involve children meaningfully

Practice tools on the portal help organisations:

- reflect on – and enhance – practice

- identify ways to prevent harm

- how to respond when children experience abuse

- promote safety and child safe strategies

- engage with children and young people

- empower children & young people

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice_tools

Example practice tool: The Voices of Young People on Safety

Strategies for engaging & empowering children and young people

- pulse checks

- activities to work through with children/young people

- assessment rubrics so staff/volunteers can see how as a whole organisation they are doing
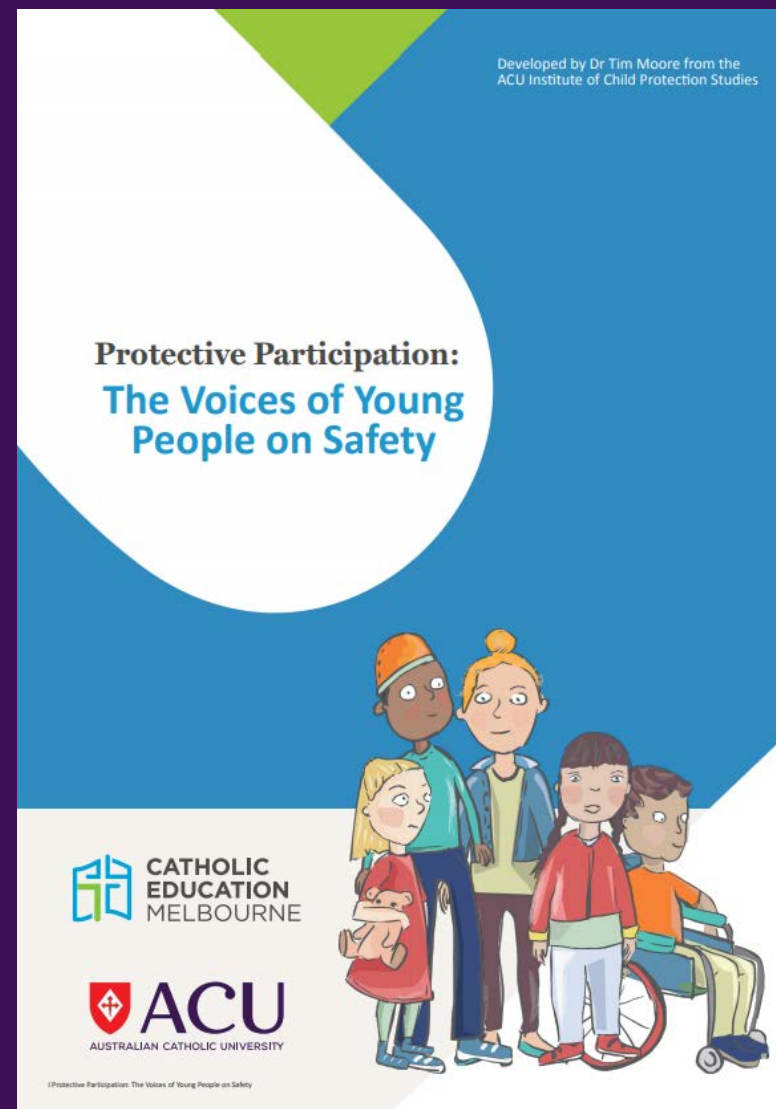
Example activity:
Worry Matrix (see page 27)

Practice Tool With Students: Worry Matrix

Why?
- To help children and young people identify their worries and concerns
- To help identify children and young people's perceptions of safety in institutions
- To help adults understand what concerns children and young people hold

Who With?
Children and young people aged 7-18 years old

You'll Need?
- 5-10 post-it notes for each participant
- 1x large butchers paper
- Marker pens
- Textas or pens for each participant

Time?
You should allocate 20-30 minutes

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/voices of young people on safety/worry matrix

Example article:

Situational Crime Prevention

Understanding Situational Crime Prevention for Child Sexual Abuse: What services need to know

TEXT BOX 1 – KEY RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH SERVING ORGANISATIONS

Organisations should assess the following key factors to determine their 'risk-level' for child sexual abuse include:

Characteristics of the children you serve

Does your organisation serve children that have characteristics that may mean they are more vulnerable to child sexual abuse? Factors to think about include:

- Whether there are children that are socially isolated, shy, non-assertive, lonely or needy
- Children that are female and/or young
- Children that come from families that may make them vulnerable (e.g. parents both work two jobs; overcrowded households; homelessness; experiencing family violence or abuse at home)
- Children that live in communities that may make them vulnerable (e.g. exposure to community violence, poverty, high crime areas)

Organisation's physical environment

Are there elements of the layout, building design, or other features of your organisation that would make it easier for grooming behaviour to go undetected, or for abuse to occur? Factors to think about include:

- The physical characteristics of your organisation such as the organisation's buildings, surrounds and other areas that may increase risk
- Are there any locations within your organisation that are isolated, poorly supervised, or obstructed from surveillance?

- Are there any other facilities used by your organisation that may increase the risk of abuse (e.g. local pool, parks, and shopping centres)?

Routine activities of the organisation

Is there anything in the day-to-day activities your organisation conducts that influences the risk of abuse to children? Examples to think about include:

- High volumes of children using a change room or facility requiring privacy (e.g. pool, gym change room, hall)
- Excursions to public venues where risk assessments haven't been conducted
- Regular activities that require children to have unsupervised time with adults (e.g. medical procedures, music lessons, counselling sessions)

Organisation's policies and overall culture

Does your organisation have effective established policies and a workplace culture that makes the protection of children a priority? Questions include:

- Are there rules and policies enforcing standards of staff conduct and consequences (e.g. relating to limiting physical contact or unsupervised children)?
- Do staff feel adequately trained to deal with child sexual abuse issues?
- Are there processes for responding to allegations of child abuse?
- Are staff clear on their roles and responsibilities when it comes to protecting children from abuse?
- Does the organisation adequately control mechanisms for staff "grooming" of children (e.g. the internet, social media)?

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/what services need to know

Portal practice tool: Kids Central Toolkit

- Explores child-safe environments and child-centred practice

- Provides workers and services with information, resources and tools to use child-centred approaches in their work with children, young people and families

- Based around six key principles that support child-centred practice, and each principle includes a range of tools and resources, which are available to download.

- Includes online training is available to support implementation of the Toolkit

Kids Central Toolkit
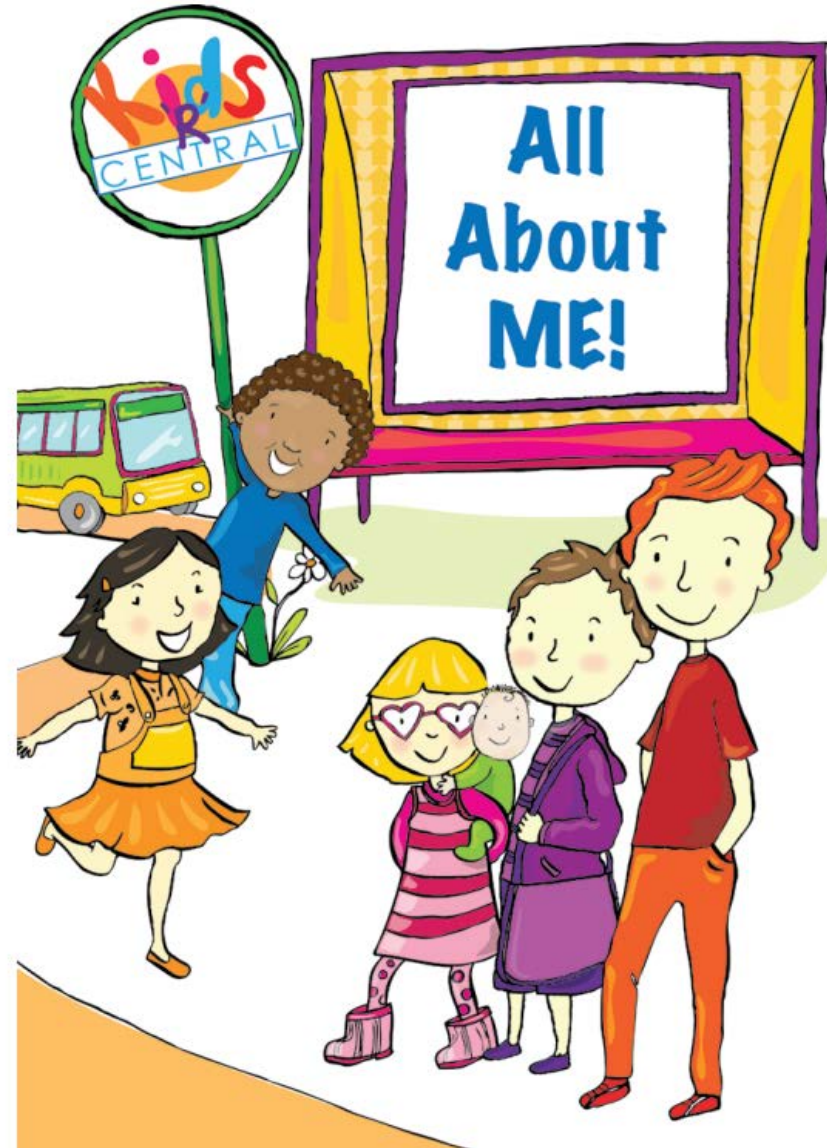
ACU Safeguarding Children Capability Framework

Our Safeguarding Children Capability Framework informs all courses, programs, services and information provided by ACU.

Please hover camera over the QR code to link to Framework on the Portal website

The **ACU Safeguarding Children Capability Framework** draws on research by ICPS and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, as well as government standards, such as the Victorian Government's Child-Safe Standards, which apply to all organisations providing services to children and young people up to the age of 18.

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/safeguarding framework

ACU AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Graduate Certificate in Safeguarding Children and Young People

Our ACU Graduate Certificate in Safeguarding Children and Young People aims to develop knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues and responses to safeguarding children and young people, exploring the conditions and factors that facilitate or impede child-safe environments

Please hover camera over the QR code to link to Portal website

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safeguardingchildren/.acu.edu.au/qualifications and professional learning

Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey

This survey measures the capabilities of the workforce (staff and volunteers) in preventing and responding to safeguarding concerns. It gives you an opportunity to assess the capabilities, behaviours and attitudes of the workforce in relation to safeguarding children by measuring the following:

- organisational culture and awareness of policy and procedures
- confidence to act
- attitudes to prevention and agency of children and young people
- situational prevention knowledge and education.

Please hover your phone camera over the QR code to get to the survey prospectus

Preventing child sexual abuse

This project aims to develop a reliable and rigorous measure of staff capabilities in preventing child sexual abuse.

safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/self-assessment

Taking part in the research

- The research is **funded by organisations** choosing to take part and benefit from the data visualisation *(No current government funding)*

- Once a research contract is entered into, an organisational representative/s fill in **three online forms** to tailor each survey to the individual organisation

- Survey links are then sent to the representative/s and the organisation can choose to **survey participants on site** or to provide the link for participants to **complete the survey offsite**.

- Once a minimum of 10 responses have come in a log on is sent to the representative to **access the organisations' 'Dashboard'** (Data visualisation)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au

Dashboard

https://icps.au1.qualitrcs.com

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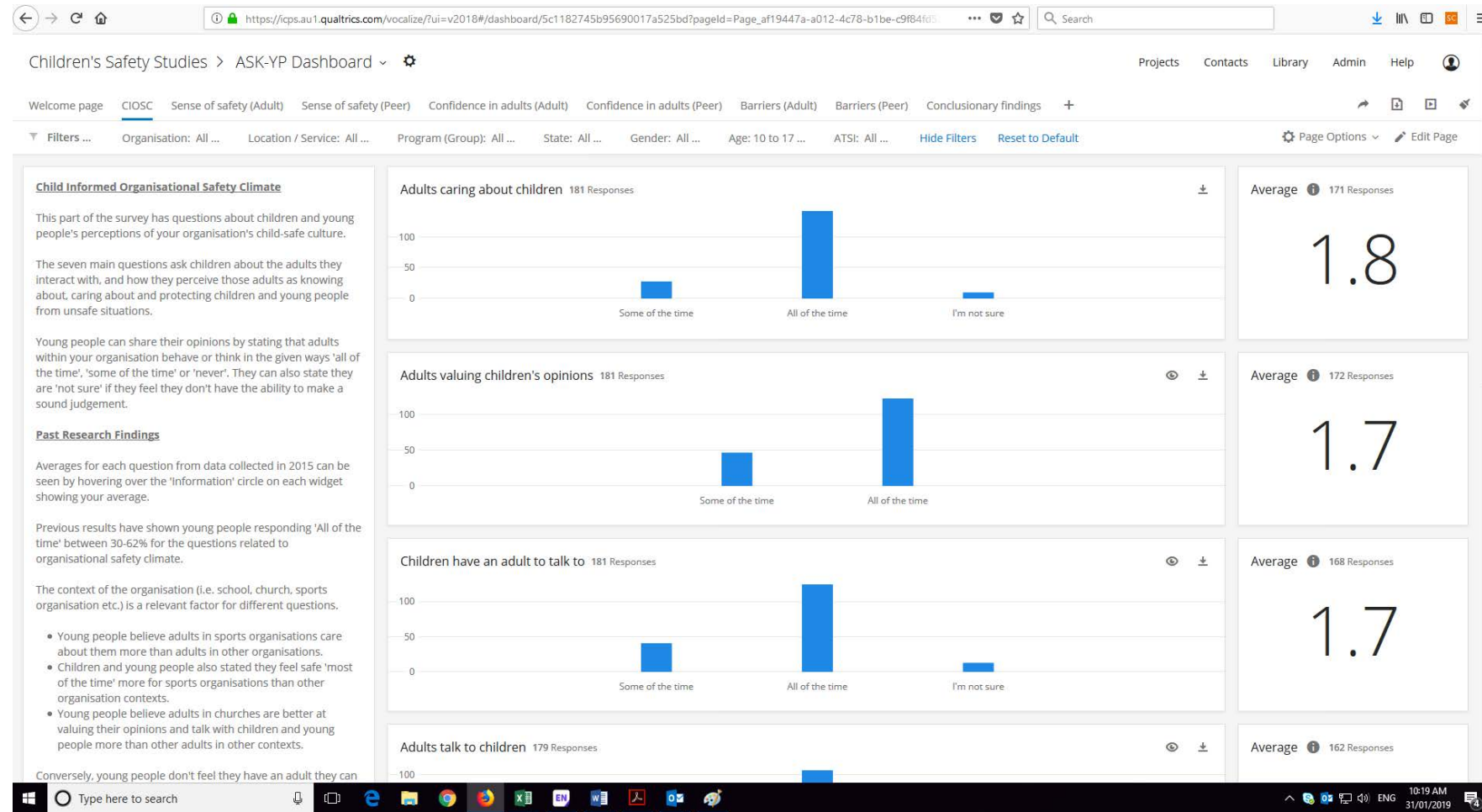
Questions from you …

Find out more about the Children and Young People's Safety Studies

Children's Safety Studies Manager
Douglas Russell
P (03) 9230 8398
E ICPS@acu.edu.au

Director, ICPS
Prof Daryl Higgins
P (03) 9953 3607
E daryl.higgins@acu.edu.au

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Questions from us …

Please use the QR code above or go to:
https://tinyurl.com/y96vrgpe

to access our post-think tank survey.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.