

MEDIA RELEASE – 27 October 2006

CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS FOR SHEPPARTON

“All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe all of the time,” said Mr Bernie Geary, the Child Safety Commissioner at the ‘Me, You, Us – A Safer Community’ Forum held in Shepparton today.

Mr Geary congratulated those people and organisations in the community who were already “demonstrating an unfailing commitment to working and volunteering in ways that supported the best interests of children”.

Mr Geary then issued a challenge asking “How confident are you that all children in your community are and feel safe? How will you work together to ensure child safety remains a priority for all the organisations of which you are a part?”

Mr Geary explained his office had developed two resources to help organisations become more safe, and to assist parents in identifying child-safe activities. The publications are *A Guide for Creating a Child-Safe Organisation* and *Information for Parents: Things to look at when selecting child-safe activities or services for your child*. They can be ordered for free from the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner at www.ocsc.vic.gov.au.

Mr Geary said “Essential to any child safe organisation is a strong commitment to child safety that is clearly stated and shared by all staff, where the organisation takes responsibility for carefully recruiting and managing its staff and volunteers”.

“A strong commitment to reducing the risk of harm to children should be clearly evident in an organisation’s risk management policies and practices.”

“Ideally this means an organisation should have a child safety policy in place to which its staff and volunteers are committed.”

“It also means that a clear code of conduct should be developed and made available to guide staff and volunteers in their interaction with children.”

“To help deliver on this commitment, all staff and volunteers need to know what their roles and responsibilities are; and to be given the support and supervision they need to successfully undertake these.”

“In addition, organisations need to be open to receiving feedback, including complaints, and to establish processes that ensure the first priority is the protection and best interests of children.”

“Making safety a reality for all children will require a collaborative partnership between government, parents, organisations whose staff and volunteers work with children, and the community in general.”

“It is a partnership that I hope we can all make an important contribution to”, said Mr Geary.

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