**Gymea Peoples Church and Mandatory Reporting**

Current NSW legislation governing the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect of children is the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. Such reports can be made to the NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services and/or the Police.

The kind of abuse in question includes physical, sexual, emotional/psychological abuse; neglect; and exposure to family violence.

**Anyone** who “suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused” (see Family and Community Services website - [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)) *should* report it to Community Services. However the legislation describes those for whom it is **mandatory** to report such suspicions. This includes those who, “in the course of their professional work or other paid employment” involving the care of children, have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of “significant harm.” It also includes those “who hold a management position in an organization,” the duties of which include direct responsibility for or direct supervision of activities related to children.

At Gymea Peoples Church we understand this to mean that **mandatory** reporting is the responsibility of our Pastor, being the only one here in “paid employment,” *as well as* those who are designated as Elders, Deacons or Ministry Directors/ Departmental Leaders. It is anticipated that if anyone becomes aware of examples of abuse, as described by the legislation, in connection with the various ministries of the Church, that it will be reported to the relevant Departmental Leader, who in discussion with the Pastor will make the appropriate report. This is not limited to abuse that may occur while children are in our care. (A separate Policy and set of procedures exists for dealing with accusations against Church workers of sexual or other abuse of children.) Departmental Leaders will be made aware of their responsibility.

Irrespective of the outcome of deliberations by the Leadership, a report will be made back to the person who raised notice of the alleged/suspected abuse.

As members of the Body of Christ, as represented in this local assembly, we feel a primary responsibility to care for the needs and reputations of one another and of the Church, and to support those who struggle with the normal difficulties of life. We are not primarily agents of the government. However we acknowledge that we have a responsibility to report what amounts to criminal/illegal activity or activity proscribed by the Act to the appropriate authorities.

19/11/12