



# Teacher and Parent Information

## Welcome

Bravehearts is Australia's leading child protection advocate specific to child sexual assault. Its Vision is to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child by 2020 as outlined in its breakthrough 2012 research The 3 Piers to Prevention – Educate, Empower, Protect.

It will achieve this via lobbying, research, prevention/education programs, specialist therapeutic services, online training and face-to-face delivery workshops offering a number of different modules for professional development training.

In the near future your child/children will have the opportunity to experience our highly successful interactive, live personal safety program called Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure. NOTE: This program is not sex education. It is a program teaching personal safety. In fact, at no time does it use the word 'sex' or 'sexual assault.'

We encourage parents and teachers to organise and attend an information session prior to the delivery of the show. This will assist in dispelling any concerns, answering any questions and helping adults in your children's lives to understand the issue and reinforce the critical messages and teachings of personal safety.

Bravehearts would like to thank you in advance, for giving our education team the opportunity to empower and educate your children with the skills and knowledge on how to keep safe.

Should you require any further information or would like to organise an information workshop for staff or parents, please don't hesitate to contact Bravehearts on **1800 BRAVE 1 (1800 272 831)**

## Bravehearts Education Program

### Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure

We were often asked by parents what they could do to help protect their children against sexual assault. It was with this in mind that Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure CD Rom was launched in 2003. The CD Rom was developed with some of the best child safety education and counselling minds in Australia to provide children with the skills to stay safe and to present strategies helping them to seek support.

Following the release of the CD Rom, it was decided the personal safety information and messages in the CD Rom should be adapted into a live educational presentation to enable the messages in the show to reach more children, be more available and accessible.

In 2006 Bravehearts developed Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure live school-based program. The program is designed for Prep to Yr3 students and aims to **empower** them with the tools to keep safe and **educate** them, with a focus on resiliency, while building confidence and awareness. It also teaches children what to do if they feel unsafe and unsure.

The show is a non-confronting and engaging way to teach children personal safety and encourages children to speak out about any unsafe situation such as child sexual assault, bullying in the playground, or domestic violence at home.

The 30-minute interactive show is presented by a trained facilitator who guides the children through a power-point presentation and songs complete with actions, along with Ditto (our lion cub mascot), who encourages audience participation.

The show is performed for up to 120 children and is presented to a combination of year groups during one session. We have found older children often assist with keeping the younger children involved when the team interact with the audience and during the songs.

The children learn Ditto's 3 rules:

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.
2. It's *okay* to say *no* if you feel unsafe or unsure.
3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell someone about it.

The Ditto Show consists of:

1. Yes and no feelings (and *feeling safe/unsafe*).
2. Warning signs in the body (and *feeling safe and unsafe*).
3. Private parts (*mouth, chest, between the legs, bottom*) and when it might be okay for an adult to look or touch private parts (*e.g. going to the doctor/or young children needing help in the bath*).
4. Secrets (*There's no secret that you can't tell someone*).
5. What to do if you have a *no* feeling/feel unsafe (*Run and Tell song*).

### **How teachers and parents can get involved**

We actively invite parents and teachers to participate in the show as it's a great opportunity to show your children you understand the messages and the importance of telling someone if they feel unsafe or have a 'no' feeling. It is also beneficial for children if a teacher engages with the group at the end of the performance to help them explore who they can talk to if they have a 'no' feeling. This talk doesn't have to be long, around 5 minutes is great! Alternatively this could be presented in the classroom straight after the show.

## **Additional resources – Ditto in a Box**

To continue and reinforce the messages presented in the show, an educational resource is now available to purchase titled *Ditto in a Box*. This enhances Ditto's key messages in a format to be presented and continued in the classroom requiring a maximum of 20 hours of modular teaching material using lesson plans, worksheets, posters, stories, games, music and flashcards. The program of study is designed to be taught in five modules that mirror the key criteria in the show. There are opportunities for assessment, revisiting aspects of the program required for your class/group/individuals and time to reinforce and concept check the strategies provided to Keep Safe.

*Ditto's Three Rules* posters are an excellent way to keep reinforcing crucial messages that underpin the content in the show. The education resource including songs, provides endless opportunities to present, revisit, concept check and guide discussion on each of the main criteria found in each module that includes; Yes and No Feelings, Warning Signs, Private Parts, Secrets and Who To Tell.

### **To purchase Ditto in a Box go to:**

[Bravehearts.org.au](https://bravehearts.org.au) > Shop

### **For more information on Ditto's resources go to:**

[Bravehearts.org.au](https://bravehearts.org.au) > Education > Education Resources

**Parent support** – We also strongly recommend using *Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Activity Book* (provided to each school child who sees the live show) as a follow-up to take home as this will help to reinforce the key messages learned in the show.

## What are the signs?

There is always difficulty in identifying a child who has experienced sexual assault. More often than not, they experience fear, shame and guilt. Children often do not have the language or cognitive development to fully express what has happened to them. The only way we can be 100% sure, is if they disclose this information to us. That is why we believe in helping teachers and parents to create an environment that embraces the personal safety messages. By empowering children with the skills, language and knowledge to keep safe, it will help them speak out when they are feeling unsafe.

Some of the most common signs to look for in children include:

**Internalising behaviour:** e.g. withdrawn, more quiet than normal and/or teary.

**Externalising behaviour:** e.g. aggression and/or chaotic behaviour, as well as sexualised behaviours.

### For more information please refer to:

[Bravehearts.org.au](https://bravehearts.org.au) > [Help and advice](#) > [Information and resources](#)

If you are unsure or would like to speak to someone, contact Bravehearts specialised support team on 1800 272 831

## Responding to disclosures

It is quite common for most people to feel uneasy at the thought of a child disclosing sexual assault. They may dismiss the child's disclosure for fear of 'getting involved'. This is where Bravehearts welcomes the opportunity to educate and empower members of the community such as parents and teachers, so they feel confident in responding to such disclosures. It is important to see the disclosure as a privilege to have been trusted with such sensitive information. Imagine how hard it is for a child who possibly feels powerless and frightened and then to share such an experience with another person. Disclosing is often the most difficult step for a child to take and the disclosure in itself is often not a planned or intentional action.

### If a child discloses to you:

#### DO:

- **LISTEN** - listen carefully to what they say. Be careful not to ask probing questions. Respond by saying something like: "Thank you for coming to me. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?" or simply repeat back to them, word for word, what you heard them say.
- **AFFIRM** - let the child know you believe them.
- **DON'T BLAME** - tell them it is not their fault.
- **SUPPORT** - tell the child they are not responsible for what happened to them and that it must have been very hard for them to tell you.
- **SAFETY** - let the child know you will do everything in your power to help them and the importance of letting other people know so they too can help keep them safe.
- **DOCUMENT** - Write everything down as soon as you can, using the child's own words. Include things like behaviours you have noticed as well as anything they have said previously that may have hinted at the assault.
- **CHECK** - Check your school or centre's policy on reporting disclosures.
- **ACT** - In the best interest of the child, always report disclosure to the nominated person or agency.

#### DON'T:

- React emotionally or accuse.
- Seek any more information than is absolutely necessary, i.e. details of the assault.
- Ask leading or probing questions or put words in the child's mouth.
- Ask excessive questions as this may further distress the child and cause confusion and hinder further investigation by the appropriate authorities.
- Make promises that you cannot keep – particularly about not telling others about information such as the police or that you will keep them safe.
- Leave the child alone immediately after a disclosure.
- Do not take photographs of the child's injuries.

## Reporting disclosure

**For Parents** – If a child opens up about feeling unsafe or being harmed, then contacting your local police station and/or child protection services in your state or territory for support and further assistance is essential.

**For Teachers** – Mandatory reporting is the legal requirement according to a particular state or territory's law/s for an individual performing a particular role i.e. a teacher or a doctor, to report suspected cases of child abuse (which includes sexual assault). Please note that all states and territories in Australia have mandatory reporting requirements which vary according to each state or territory. If you believe or suspect a child is in an unsafe situation you should report your concerns to either your nominated supervisor or relevant state authority.

## About Bravehearts

Bravehearts' key purpose is to educate, empower and protect Australian kids from sexual assault.

Our Vision is to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child by 2020. To achieve this we depend on business, government and community support. This will ensure continued delivery of our school-based prevention programs as well as training, counselling, support and advocacy for survivors. It will also drive research and ensure the continued development of important legislative reform agenda.

Since its inception in 1997, Bravehearts has successfully moved this once taboo subject out of the shadows and into the light. As a result of its persistence, this distinction was acknowledged and supported by the Commonwealth Government and COAG via the National Framework for the Protection of Australia's Children (2009-2020).

It is only through increasing general awareness, increasing skills and capacity building for those working and living with children, preventative strategies, education and strong policies and legislation that we can accomplish Our Mission - to stop child sexual assault in society. Our specialist services are instrumental in preventing the sexual assault of Australian children and giving hope and healing to the most vulnerable and precious members of our community – our kids.

## How Bravehearts began

Bravehearts Inc. was created in 1997 by Hetty Johnston (Founder & Executive Director). Her involvement in the area of child protection was precipitated by her daughter's disclosure of sexual assault by a family member, Hetty's father-in-law. This disclosure encouraged others in the family to also disclose. The result was horrendous. Almost every female member of the family had been sexually assaulted over a 40-year-period across three generations. Each one remained silent about the assaults because each believed they were the only one, that no one would believe them if they told and that if they did speak out, they would be held responsible for breaking up the family. Unable to find specialised support services for child sexual assault victims or families, Hetty used her personal and professional experiences to establish Bravehearts and so began the journey of raising awareness about an issue shrouded in silence, bringing it from the shadows into the light and advocating for stronger legislation and education.

## Statistics

- It is estimated that 1 in 5 children are victims of sexual assault. (*James, 2000, The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006*)
- 'Girls and boys of all ages are sexually assaulted and victims are sometimes toddlers, young children and even babies'. (*NSW Child Protection Council, 2000*)
- 'Children rarely lie about or imagine sexual assault. In 98% of cases their statements are found to be true'. (*Dympna House, 1990*) 'In 70-90% of cases, the sexual assault offender is known to the child; that is they are a relative or trusted friend. Only 5% of child sexual assault cases are 'stranger danger''. (*Child Protection Council, 1993*)
- 'There is widespread agreement in literature that child sexual assault spans all races, economic classes and ethnic groups'. (*Goldman & Padayachi 1997; Finkelhor, 1993, 1994; Oates, 1990; Peters, Wyatt & Finkelhor, 1986; O'Donnell & Craney, 1982*)
- Though 16 years of research, we have found 60% of Bravehearts counselling clients are aged 4-8yrs. (*Ronken & McKillop, 2011*)