

## Carly's Story

I live in Australia, was raised in the fellowship and intend to remain there for the rest of my life. For me and my family it is right and we love our Sunday morning meetings. I love my friends who go to meetings and I also have friends who do not attend meetings. I feel that my generation (40 to 50) has a more balanced view of the world and how we fit into it as a Christian group than previous generations. My family have been professing for several generations on both sides and we were brought up to respect the workers and friends. We did this unquestioningly.

There were incidents in my childhood, however, that changed my view of the world and who I should trust and ultimately, who my children should trust. A family friend made inappropriate advances towards me when I was about 9 years old and even though I didn't really know what had even happened, I instinctively knew that it felt wrong. Thankfully he never touched me again though I have no idea why I escaped because I am not the only one to have been affected by this man and I don't think we'll ever know just how many girls he interfered with as many people harbour the memories for their entire life without telling anyone.

Those events have had an effect on my life. Firstly, because I vowed never to tell my parents (they do know now because of other events), and secondly because it taught me not to fully trust anyone with my own children.

In regards to not telling my parents. I now know that I should have told them at the time but I felt that they would not believe me given the mans standing in the church and as a dear family friend. Even now looking back over so many years, I still don't think they would have believed me had I told them at the time. As I said above, they have now been told and do believe me and although it's been horrible witnessing their incredible sense of betrayal by this man, there has been a huge feeling of relief for me that I would describe as a liberating experience. I can now speak of the events to anyone I wish, without the feelings that I will be brushed aside as if I'm making the whole thing up.

In regards to not trusting anyone with my own children. I have always been very open with my children by telling them that if anyone touches them in an inappropriate manner I will always believe them, regardless of who it is. I have told them that it may be a grandparent, a friend, a worker or anyone at all. There is a danger of being too over the top about this and in the process destroying their trust in everyone so I've tried to get the balance right. Tell them of the dangers but at the same time teach them to trust others until they betray that trust.

There is a lot more to my story than I am able to tell because I do not wish to implicate anyone. I feel extremely strongly about paedophilia and I want to do anything in my power to stamp it out amongst our friends. Some people on this website have mentioned that our fellowship lends itself to paedophilia. In some ways I can see their point and I agree, however, I must point out that this is in no way unique to our faith. We trust out workers in the same way other churches trust their preachers, priests etc or the likes of a scout group may trust their leaders. We allow

our children to mix with other children with parents in the faith, as most other parents the world over trust their children into other peoples care.

We must realise, though, that we are at the very least JUST as prone to having paedophiles amongst us as any other religion or group. Therefore we must not hide and feel that because this subject is so horrible, unpalatable and something we hate to think and speak about, that we can ignore it and it will go away. We MUST talk about it. We MUST make the workers aware of it. We MUST bring the perpetrators to justice. And we MUST tell our children to beware and communicate with us. They MUST know that we will always believe them.