

## **Our Second Public Statement**

This statement was provided on 1 April, 2014, by Ron Mell, CEO, YMCA Australia, at a Child Awares Conference in Melbourne, to introduce a joint session on "A Partnership approach to developing a Child Safe Organisation", being delivered by Melinda Crole, YMCA Australia, and the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF).

This followed a public oration delivered the previous day at the forum by Justice McLellan, including references to the YMCA of NSW.

**Tuesday 1 April, 2014**

**Statement by Ron Mell, CEO, YMCA Australia**

**Child Aware Approaches Conference, Melbourne, Australia.**

Yesterday you would have heard the wonderful and heart felt speech by Justice Peter McLellan AM. In that oration he made mention of Case Study 2 into the Jonathon Lord case and the role of YMCA NSW.

Most of his comments are matters I'll leave to YMCA NSW to respond to - and which will no doubt be the subject of the Royal Commission's findings. Nevertheless I wish to say this, Children were abused under the care of a YMCA.

We acknowledge that in relation to this case the systems and processes failed in the manner identified by Justice McLellan.

That, as a Movement dedicated to providing opportunity for children young people and families to reach their potential and in supporting the rights of a child, this is a devastating reality. It is one that we are deeply sorry for.

Sorry to the children who were abused. We don't know the extent to which that abuse will affect their lives and we may never know.

We acknowledge that families have to deal with this. We also acknowledge that there are others suffering as well, including the staff and volunteers at YMCA NSW.

At a national level, YMCA Australia is not standing still. We're addressing the findings and evidence that Justice McLellan referred by reviewing policies, processes, resources, culture and governance. For example every YMCA, in over 700 communities across Australia, has either been audited or is scheduled for an audit, by the ACF.

We must be able to assure to all of the communities we serve, that all YMCAs are child safe and that the rights of children are preserved and encouraged.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Child Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is a significant and timely inquiry and its findings and recommendations will be of critical importance for the Australian community and all YMCAs. YMCA fully supports this work.

And out of this inquiry, out of the public hearings, it is essential we draw from the learnings and review and strengthen our organisations so that all are child safe.

This tragedy is very personal for the victims and their families. But when I have visited staff and volunteers at YMCA NSW and indeed throughout the YMCA Movement across Australia, it is obvious that it is personal for them as well.

And there is a need to keep it personal. This is not a cause which is just organisational. We are all guardians of the children and young people under our care whether that it is at a direct care level or at a management or governance level.

YMCA will continue to do everything in its power to protect children and young people with the intention to prevent any such offences occurring again. As a leader within the YMCA, I also have a professional and personal commitment to this. The YMCA people within this room and across Australia have a similar view.