

04 September 2013

**Re: Submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.  
Issue 2: Towards Healing**

Dear Commissioner,

In response to your call for submissions regarding the Towards Healing process, I am submitting the results of research conducted at the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation, into the long-term consequences of childhood abuse on health and wellbeing.

This research, conducted by Dr Rebecca Reeve and Dr Kees van Gool, uses the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing to investigate the impact of childhood physical, sexual and combined physical and sexual abuse on long-term health problems and self-harming behaviour. The research findings provide further evidence of the lasting impacts of abuse on victims, and the need for governments to address these long-term impacts through appropriate services and policies. The results indicate that, after controlling for other factors, Australian adults who were abused in childhood suffer from more physical and mental health problems and have higher annual health care costs than adults who were not abused. Whilst the impacts differ by gender and abuse type, the findings also show that adults with a history of abuse are more likely to experience drug and alcohol problems and to have attempted suicide. In all cases the outcomes are worst for victims of combined physical and sexual abuse.

Given the high and long lasting health needs of child abuse victims, our research calls for further reforms in the coordination of health and social services to treat victims appropriately and minimise the long term physical and mental harms caused by abuse. Moreover, in addition to the persistent impacts on the victim, child abuse has long-term societal consequences including the impact of self-harm on the friends and family of victims and on-going costs to the health system and the associated tax burden. This should be taken into consideration when investing in services for victims of child abuse.

I enclose a copy of our paper for your information, which is forthcoming in the September 2013 edition of the Economic Record. For copyright reasons the paper should not be made publicly available, but can be obtained by subscribers to the Economic Record and is available in 'early view' from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/doi/10.1111/1475-4932.12044/abstract>

**Yours sincerely,**

**Dr Rebecca Reeve**