

The Constable Care Child Safety Foundation (Inc.)

Patrons: Mr Karl O'Callaghan APM – Commissioner of Police
The Hon Wayne Martin – Chief Justice of Western Australia



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MEDIA RELEASE

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CONSTABLE CARE SAYS “IT’S OKAY TO TELL”

The parents of abducted and murdered Sofia Rodriguez-Urrutia today endorsed the Constable Care Child Safety Foundation’s (Constable Care) 2008 program – *It’s Okay to Tell*.

Launched at Tuart Hill Primary School this morning, *It’s Okay To Tell* is an educational puppet show teaching young children to identify and take action against potential child abuse.

It’s Okay to Tell will visit metropolitan and regional primary schools throughout Western Australia in 2008.

The Rodriguez-Urrutia’s have endorsed the program and the work of the Foundation because they say they want to do all they can to prevent what happened to their eight-year-old daughter happening to other children.

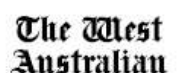
Sofia was snatched, sexually assaulted and murdered in a public toilet, in Livingstone Market Place Shopping Centre in Canning Vale, in June, 2006.

According to Mr Rodriguez-Urrutia, Constable Care’s *It’s Okay To Tell* initiative is a vital one in identifying child abuse and potentially preventing what happened to Sofia.

“It is a sad fact of modern society that everyone needs to be aware of the threat of child abuse. We believe children, especially, need to be made aware of the potential risk of child abuse and given the confidence to report it if they feel it could happen to them, or, worse, if it is happening to them.

“We are supporting the work of Constable Care, particularly its *It’s Okay To Tell* program, because we want to do everything we can to ensure what happened to our little girl doesn’t happen to another child,” said Mr Rodriguez-Urrutia.

Constable Care CEO Vick Evans said the program reflected the Foundation’s objective of helping young children tackle difficult contemporary issues through a language they can understand and engage with – as well as promoting general child safety. He welcomed the support of the Rodriguez-Urrutia’s in dealing with the sensitive issue of child abuse.



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“We salute the bravery of the Rodriguez-Urrutia’s in putting themselves forward publicly to support campaigns like ours, after the appalling tragedy that beset Sofia,” he said. “While we can only begin to imagine what they have gone through, we like all decent minded West Australians share their determination to make sure this can never happen again.

“Through our work we are trying to give children the knowledge they need to be alert to the danger of abuse, how to avoid it and what to do if they fall victim to it. And we say a big thanks to the Rodriguez-Urrutia’s in supporting us in this goal,” said Mr Evans.

Following contemporary research findings into child abuse patterns, *It’s Okay to Tell* shifts the emphasis away from “stranger danger” and examines abuse where the perpetrator is known to the victim.

It also looks at the issue of “grooming” and the victims’ noticeable changes in behaviour. It examines the notion of good and bad touching and the guilt/fear the victim may experience.

The Constable Care Child Safety Foundation is a non-profit organisation which specialises in promoting child and community safety messages to children in schools through the magic of puppetry and interactive performance. Extensive evaluation has shown early intervention through such medium promotes:

- long-term retention of positive messages among children aged between two and 12 years;
- positive behaviour; and
- a reduction in personal and social problems later on in life.

Constable Care reaches more than 157,000 two to 12-year-olds every year in Western Australian communities from Esperance to Kununurra.

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