

MEDIA RELEASE – 22 April 2009

Provocative new bill poster campaign demands community action to stop child abuse and neglect

The Australian Childhood Foundation has once again partnered with advertising agency JWT to create a unique outdoor advertising campaign to raise awareness about the seriousness of neglect as a form of child abuse. Entitled “*Invisible*”, the installations are located at popular sites around Melbourne CBD and feature a bill poster pasted over a child-sized mannequin.

The highly emotive posters depict a lonely, abandoned figure of a child so invisible to everyone that he can be literally covered up and made to disappear. It acts as an invitation to members of the public to reflect on how easy it is not to notice vulnerable children. The campaign highlights the need for adults to be aware of children in their local neighbourhood and be prepared to take action to offer support.

The installations will be positioned at various sites around the city including Southern Cross Station, Bourke Street, and on the corner of St Kilda Rd and Commercial Rd, from Wednesday 22nd April.

Dr Joe Tucci, CEO, Australian Childhood Foundation, will be available for interviews on Wednesday 22 April at 10.30 at the Southern Cross Station site, cnr Spencer and Bourke Streets.

“This idea is a graphic dramatization of the neglect that some children experience in their own homes and the way that the community can so readily ignore it” says Richard Muntz, Executive Creative Director of JWT Melbourne.

Child neglect occurs when the most basic of needs are not being met (food, housing, warmth and healthcare). It also includes children who are not provided with positive and nurturing care. Neglect can have devastating effects on children’s development and in some circumstances even cause death.

“Neglect is a serious form of abuse. In the past twelve months, we have been shocked by the terrible conditions that some children have been forced to live in”, said Dr Joe Tucci, CEO of the Australian Childhood Foundation. *“When children are neglected, they are told that they do not matter, that they are not important enough to be cared about. When parents stop caring for children, then the community has to help. Ignoring it only confirms to children that no-one else cares about them as well. I hope this campaign will encourage everyone to do something if they are worried about a child’s safety”.*

This confronting life size installation is an extension of the Stop Child Abuse Campaign launched in November, 2008. To find out what you can do to help stop child abuse and neglect, please visit www.stopchildabusenow.com.au

Child abuse is Australia’s most critical community problem. Last year, there were 317,526 new reports of child abuse and neglect received across Australia. That equates to one report every two minutes. More infants under the age of 12 months were found to have been abused or neglected than children in any other age group. Last year, there were more children living away from their family for their own protection than ever before. The number of children in care has more than doubled in the past decade increasing from 13 979 in 1996 to 31 166 in 2008.

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