



# Hidden cost of child abuse

RISING levels of child abuse cost Australia up to \$30 billion a year, a new study says.

Researchers from Monash University and Access Economics found almost 200,000 children were abused or neglected and there were 3600 substantiated reports of abuse in their study in 2007.

They say the true figure could be five times higher than official figures.

The landmark study put a price on the economic and emotional cost of child abuse.

The report calculated the cost to the community of the consequences of abuse over the lifetime of children who were abused for the first time in 2007.

"The real cost of child abuse to the Australian economy in 2007 was \$10.7 billion and could be as high as \$30.1 billion, including the monetary value of pain and suffering that children experience," the report said.

The figures account for the costs associated with protecting and caring for child victims of abuse, including wages for doctors, nurses, police, social workers, judges, probation officers, teachers and foster carers.

It also includes responding to crime associated with child abuse and government expenditure on educational assistance for victims.

Director of Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, Monash University professor Chris Goddard said: "This report highlights the urgent need for a national uniform approach to one of Australia's most serious — and financially crippling — problems."