



HUMANIST SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

(Reg. No. A0020272M)

Affiliated with the Council of Australian Humanist Societies (CAHS)
and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), London, UK

<http://vic.humanist.org.au/>

31 May 2012

The Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment (National Children's Commissioner) Bill 2012

The Humanist Society of Victoria Inc. (HSV) is a secular organisation whose members foster an ethical, reasoned and responsible approach to life. It supports human rights, democratic processes, and a just and inclusive governance. HSV seeks to alleviate suffering, to promote well-being and the circumstances where all individuals can attain their full potential. It engages in educational, counselling and charitable activities.

We thank the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Humanists regard the protection of children and young people as a basic responsibility of all civilised societies, and we believe that all human beings have the right to live in safety and dignity, particularly those who may be vulnerable or helpless. We note that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Australia is a signatory, acknowledges that children are entitled to special care and assistance (Article 25.2).

The Humanist Society of Victoria supports the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner.

We reiterate our public comments from 2010 that there is need for greater protection of children and young people in Australia and that a National Children's Commissioner would uphold Australia's national and international human-rights obligations.

The protection of children requires universal and equal coverage across Australia. A National Children's Commissioner could oversee the formulation of universal guidelines and the provision of consistent family-education material and legislative guidelines to ensure the welfare and safety of all children.

In particular Victorian Humanists support a mandate for the Commissioner on behalf of indigenous children; children suffering from medical, educational or economic disadvantage; gay and lesbian teenagers; asylum-seeker children; families from culturally and linguistically diverse traditions, and others who need an advocate. We also express our ongoing concern over the need for urgent attention to the problem of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Stuart
President

[HSV NCC]