

Mr Tim Watling
Acting Secretary
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Tim,

**Re Inquiry into the Australian Human Rights Amendment
(National Children's Commissioner) Bill 2012**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee regarding the amendment to the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*.

Children's Healthcare Australasia (CHA) is a peak body for hospitals and paediatric health services across Australia and New Zealand. We strive to support children's hospitals and health services to achieve excellence in clinical care.

CHA has been a strong supporter and advocate for some years for the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner. We applaud the government's moves to implement this position. The establishment of this position will bring Australia into line with expectations articulated by the United Nations, as well as with contemporary practice in states and territories.

CHA recognizes the importance of this position in considering the rights of all children and welcomes the National Children's Commissioner's ability to give particular attention to children who are at risk or vulnerable. We would suggest the following groups of children and young people should be the subject of dedicated attention – children and young people:

- of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent
- with disabilities (physical and/or intellectual)
- experiencing mental illness
- living with chronic disease
- living in out-of-home care
- experiencing physical and/or mental abuse
- living with parents affected by mental illness, chronic disease or other disadvantage
- living in immigration detention
- living in juvenile justice detention

While the Amendment to the *Act* defines children as people under the age of 18 and the language is inclusive of young people, CHA would strongly encourage the addition of young people with children in the title for this position ie the National Commissioner for Children and Young people.

CHA notes the costs associated with the establishment of this position and reinforces the necessity to provide appropriate resources to effectively undertake these responsibilities.



CHA encourages the committee to expeditiously progress the amendment to this Act.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Trish Davidson
President
Children's Healthcare Australasia

Dr Barbara Vernon
Chief Executive Officer
Children's Healthcare Australasia

31 May 2012