



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

From the President

1 June 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

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

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (the RACP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Human Rights Commission inquiry into the Amendment (National Children's Commissioner) Bill 2012.

The RACP supports the Amendment (National Children's Commissioner) Bill 2012 (the Bill) that establishes a National Children's Commissioner (NCC) within the Human Rights Commission. Appointing a NCC is an important step forward in ensuring best outcomes for children and young people in Australia. The RACP has been a keen advocate of the creation of a NCC, especially through its Paediatrics and Child Health Division as the representative body for paediatricians in Australia.

In particular, the RACP welcomes the broad focus of the Children's Commissioner upon the human rights of children in Australia. In our December 2011 submission to the Discussion Paper on a National Children's Commissioner we highlighted the importance of the NCC extending their focus beyond child protection issues, to include a broader remit that addresses the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. Accordingly we support the sphere of responsibility for the role as stated in the Bill.

The RACP welcomes the intent of the NCC as part of a broad advocacy role to promote awareness of issues affecting children, and to conduct relevant research and education programs. Some key issues for consideration may include:

- Understanding better and providing for the early years in a child's development;
- Increasing child and family centredness and interagency collaboration across relevant government sectors;

- Advocating for the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, refugees and immigrants, children in out-of-home-care, children with disabilities, and children who are disadvantaged socially and/ or economically by parental circumstances (for example by mental health problems, unemployment or poverty);
- Ensuring the needs of children and young people are actively considered in national reform agendas, such as the current national health reforms.

The RACP would welcome the opportunity to work in conjunction with the NCC to achieve outcomes in the best interests of Australian children. In particular, the Paediatrics and Child Health Division of the RACP would be very keen to establish a close relationship with the NCC in order to inform on issues relating to children's health, vulnerable children and child protection issues, and effective interventions for children that can improve their health trajectory into the longer term.

Should you have any queries, please contact Lisa Dive, Senior Policy Officer, on

Yours faithfully

Dr Leslie E Bolitho AM
President
RACP

A/Prof Susan Moloney
President
Paediatric & Child Health Division