



Grandparents call for the National Commissioner for children to be consultative and an inquisitive researcher

Grandparents are in the frontline in the battle to prevent child abuse and to restore children to being happy and hopeful.

The appointment of a National Children's Commissioner is a crucial manoeuvre in this battle and will improve the possibility of winning – making short, medium and long term improvements in the lives of Australia's children.

Grandparents Australia/Victoria believes that for the National Children's Commissioner to be effective the office should be independent and have its own resources adequate for it to function as an active national authority able to undertake travel to all points of Australia to meet with people from all walks of life. Grandparents, especially those raising their grandchildren, need to be listened to but do not have the wherewithal to travel so it is particularly important that the commissioner be able to send staff to local communities to sit and talk with them. The Commissioner's office should also be resources sufficiently for it to commission research and initiate action research projects.

The office of the Commissioner should have:

STATUS

- ▣ An independent status allowing the Commissioner to speak and act independently of government but within the confines set by the governing board.
- ▣ The authority to publish annual reports outlining the overall wellbeing, or otherwise, of Australia children and youth. These reports should be made available to the public as well as the government.
- ▣ An independent evaluation and review of the work of the Commissioner

RESOURCING

- ▣ A three year funding cycle
- ▣ A staff that includes contact people in each state
- ▣ An office established away from Canberra and in offices independent of government bureaucracies

GOVERNANCE

- ▣ A governance structure including:
 - ▣ A governing board representative of grandparents organisations
 - ▣ A larger reference committee which meets three times a year to provide advice on emerging issues
 - ▣ A partnership approach to methods of operating that include consultation with a range of stakeholders including grandparent's organisations, most particularly Grandparents Australia.

ROLE

- ▣ A focus on policy development and advice rather than provision of assistance with individual cases
- ▣ A mandate to develop a charter of rights for Australian children and youth that compliments the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ▣ A mandate and budget sufficient to conduct empirical research
- ▣ A mandate and budget to award grants to other organisations for the conduct of action research projects
- ▣ A mandate and budget to conduct, within the first two years of its operation, an international conference to be held in Australia on issues related to its charter
- ▣ A mandate requiring a special focus on the role of the public sector in addressing the needs of children and young people
- ▣ A mandate which acknowledges the role of the states and organisations such as the state based children courts as well as the family court
- ▣ A mandate that allows the identification of emerging issues of national significance and the conduct of special enquiries on these matters

Further information:

Anne McLeish, Director
Grandparents Australia/Victoria