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Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
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15 December 2010

ACCS response to Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill (2010)

As the peak body advocating nationally for the right of Australia's children to access quality, not for profit, community services, Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) offers our support to the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill (2010).

The Bill provides the opportunity to entrench the intent of key principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) into a separate statutory office which values children as citizens and holders of rights.

ACCS welcomes the Bill's intent for the Commissioner to coordinate policies, programs and funding across Australia which impact on children and young people (Bill 2010 3.3.c; p3). Such an approach is long overdue and will overarch the current fragmented approach to policy as it relates to children, young people and the families and communities that surround them.

The proposed Bill also supports the Australian Human Rights Framework which was launched in April 2010 after gathering widespread national support for a Rights document in Australia, by establishing an independent statutory authority which will allow for greater parliamentary scrutiny and achieve greater respect for human rights principles within the community (Australia's Human Rights Framework 2010).

ACCS welcomes the scope of powers of the Commissioner in the Bill to include **all** children and young people in Australia, and the obligation of the Commissioner to consult with children and young people and 'listen seriously to their concerns, views and wishes' (Bill 2010 section 10b; p7).

The Bill explicitly intends the establishment of a Commissioner as a measure to assist Australia to reach its international obligations; ACCS views this as an important step in protecting the best interests of Australia's children.

The Bill allows for the broad entrenchment of rights for children. ACCS believes that as the concept of rights becomes better articulated, adjudicated and enacted in Australia this will benefit not only children who are at risk, but all children in Australia.

Yours faithfully

For Prue Warrilow
National Convenor