

South Australian Child and Family Health Nurses Association,
a branch of the
Australian Association of Maternal, Child and Family Health Nurses
PO Box 56
Mount Barker
South Australia 5351



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

21 December 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010.

The South Australian Branch of Child and Family Health Nurses Association appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry.

Introduction:

The South Australian Child and Family Health Nurses Association (SACAFHNA) is a branch of the Australian Association for Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses (AAMCFHN). This is the peak professional body in Australia for nurses working with parents of children and young people from birth to 18 years of age. These associations' main aim is to provide a voice for Child and Family Health Nurses, speaking out on issues that affect not just professional members but families with children and young people. These associations, at both state and national levels also provides a forum which enables members to monitor and contribute to policy development and legislation affecting child adolescent and family health.

Discussion

To achieve substantive improvements to children's lives and health outcomes requires leadership, sustained investment and bipartisan approaches at both the State and National level.

Children and young people make up a substantial segment of the population, however children are not able to exercise the same democratic rights, in terms of political participation, as the rest of Australian society, and are therefore dependant on adult society to provide and protect their rights.

We are aware that children and young people in Australia today are experiencing a high, and rising incidence of child abuse and neglect, a rising incidence of children being placed in out-of-home care, high levels of mental and behavioural disorders and learning difficulties, high youth unemployment rates, increasing violent criminal behaviour in some groups of young people and a high suicide rate in young males.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on governments around the world to appoint Commissioners for Children. The Associations view is that these appointments are critical in keeping children's rights at the top of the political agenda. A National Commissioner could work with the State Commissioners to develop a national approach.

The Association welcomes the current initiative of the Australian Government which has recognised that children and young people in Australia require an independent and strong advocate to promote their interests and needs. An independent National Children's Commissioner would provide continued support for children's issues and the implementation of policies. They could act as a bridge between children and government and make sure that interests of younger people are heard and considered when decisions were made.

Conclusion:

The SA Branch of the Child and family Health Nurses Association supports this Bill and endorses the creation of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The SACAFHNA welcomes the Australian Government's current initiative through the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010 and endorses the creation of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People.

In addition we believe that this excellent development Federally needs to be mirrored by a SA child health commissioner to effect outcomes locally with state based entities.

Sincerely

Dr Julian Grant
President of the South Australian Child and Family Health Nurses Association