



Meeting Communiqué

Canberra, November 25th & 26th 2015

The purpose of the Australian Children's Commissioners & Guardians (ACCG) group is to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of strategic advocacy to promote and protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia, particularly the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Welcome

Aunty Violet Sheridan welcomed to country all ACCG participants.

The ACCG welcomed Colin Pettit as the newly appointed Western Australia Commissioner for Children & Young People.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Staff from the Royal Commission attended the meeting to seek advice from the ACCG about the design and implementation of principles and elements for child safe organisations. Issues discussed included: the regulation and monitoring of child safe practice; benefits of binding versus non-binding child safety frameworks; and the unintended consequences of expanding mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Commonwealth Children's eSafety Commissioner

The Commonwealth Children's eSafety Commissioner, Alastair MacGibbon, attended the meeting to discuss issues of common interest, including: mechanisms to allow the eSafety Commissioner to engage more effectively with children and young people, particularly those in care; information sharing between eSafety Commissioner and child protection services; and how the ACCG can promote the work of the eSafety Commissioner within jurisdictions.

Countering Violent Extremism

The ACCG discussed recent developments in law and policy across the country with regard to countering violent extremism and the radicalisation of children and young people. The ACCG noted the importance of engaging directly with children and young people about this issue, and the need to listen to and learn from their perspectives.

Child Safe Organisations

The Office of the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children has produced a short film featuring children and young people talking about child safety in organisations which is available from their website (<http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au>). The ACCG recommends the film as a useful introduction to child safe practice within organisations, and the views of children and young people about the topic.

Passports for Children & Young People in Care

The ACCG discussed the difficulties experienced by children and young people in care, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, who do not have a birth certificate or other acceptable proof of identity when seeking a passport. The ACCG will continue to advocate for a resolution to this issue.

Overseas Surrogacy

Following the May meeting of the ACCG, the ACCG wrote to the Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, supporting the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' enquiry into the regulatory and legislative aspects of surrogacy arrangements, and encouraging the Standing Committee to prioritise the rights and bests interests of children. The ACCG will continue to monitor this issue.

Behaviour Management in Australian Youth Justice Facilities

The ACCG considered a draft report on the use of restraint, seclusion, segregation and strip-searching in Australian youth justice facilities prepared by the office of the Western Australian Commissioner for Children People and the office of the ACT Children & Young People Commissioner. The ACCG agreed to finalise the paper for release in early 2016.

Don Dale Youth Detention Centre

The Northern Territory Children's Commissioner tabled her report on the outcomes of her investigation into services provided by the Department of Correctional Services at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. The ACCG welcomed the report, and will receive an update on the implementation of the report's recommendations at the May ACCG meeting.

ACCG Model Charter of Rights for Children & Young People Detained in Youth Justice Facilities

The ACCG discussed implementation of the Model Charter of Rights within each jurisdiction. The South Australian Guardian for Children & Young People tabled a summary of the outcomes of her consultation with residents of the Adelaide Youth Training Centre and other stakeholders about the Model Charter, and reported that the Lower House of the South Australian Parliament recently passed a Bill that enshrines a Charter of Rights for children and young people in detention.

Children & Young People at Risk of Disengagement from School

The Western Australian Commissioner for Children & Young People tabled his literature review on children and young people at risk of disengagement from school. The ACCG welcomed the review, and discussed the need for an evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative education programs. The ACCG will discuss this issue further at the May ACCG meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ACCG will be in Brisbane in May 2016.