



ANZCCGA Meeting Communiqué – 13 May 2024

On 13 May 2024, the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) came together virtually. Members acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which they work and recognised First Nations peoples' continuing connection to lands, waters and sky. The ANZCCGA pay their deep respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Elders, past and present, and children and young people.

The ANZCCGA was pleased to welcome a new member, Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts, as the inaugural Australian Capital Territory Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

Throughout the meeting members shared their jurisdictional activities promoting and advocating for the best interests of children and young people, and progressing collective action to improve outcomes for First Nations children and young people in alignment with the [ANZCCGA's 11 Advocacy Priorities](#). The following matters were also a key focus of discussion for this meeting:

National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Members discussed their ongoing commitment and interest in backing the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. Advocating for, and supporting the creation of this role, is a key priority for the ANZCCGA.

Members see this role as an integral first step towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across Australia. Members eagerly await announcements from the Federal Government regarding the progress of this position.

Media reporting on children and young people

The ANZCCGA expressed serious concern about the portrayal and treatment of children and young people in reporting by some Australian media outlets, particularly with respect to children involved in the child protection and youth justice systems.

Members highlighted the potential for serious harm when children and young people are subjected to unethical reporting, including through increasing their risk of exposure to humiliation, racism, and discrimination.

The ANZCCGA emphasises the influence that journalists and media outlets hold in propagating harmful biases, assumptions and stigma of children and young people from marginalised communities – and call on them to use this influence responsibly, to promote balanced and child-centred community discourse that models recognition for children's rights, including that of providing information to guide and support the emerging capacities of children and young people.

Online safety for children and young people

The ANZCCGA affirmed the importance of safeguarding children and young people online in an age of advancing digital technologies. While these advances promote important opportunities for children and young people, they can also lead to increased vulnerability to a diverse range of online risks and harms, including placing children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation, cyber bullying and navigating the pressures of underage activities such as gambling and pornography.

The ANZCCGA highlighted the necessity of addressing the needs of children and young people in national digital policies, to protect them from online harm.

Consulting with children and young people in legislative and policy reform

ANZCCGA members shared recent work and initiatives to amplify the voices, views and perspectives of children and young people in legislative and policy reform around the country.

New South Wales Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoë Robinson, shared key insights from hearing the lived experience of children and young people in alternative care arrangements, as presented in her recent report: [Moving cage to cage: An interim report of the Special Inquiry into children and young people in alternative care arrangements](#).

Australian Capital Territory Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook, raised the importance of challenging assumptions about young children's ability to engage in policy change, and shared her learnings in developing a child-friendly consultation process to enable children and young people to provide their views on the [draft National Autism Strategy](#).

South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People, Shona Reid, highlighted the exciting opportunities that come from including children and young people in discussions about youth justice reform. Her recent report – [From Those Who Know: Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility](#) – presents the direct voices, insights and wisdom of children and young people in detention, about how to make youth justice systems work.

ANZCCGA members commended these reports and work in amplifying the voices, views and perspectives of children and young people with lived experience.

Further information about matters raised in this communique can be sought from the ANZCCGA Co-Chair: Shona Reid, SA Guardian for Children and Young People (gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au)

Communique signatories – 13 May 2024*

- **Jodie Griffiths-Cook**, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (ACT)
- **Shahleena Musk**, Children's Commissioner (NT)
- **Luke Twyford**, Commissioner (Qld)
- **Natalie Lewis**, Commissioner (Qld)
- **Shayna Smith**, Public Guardian (Qld)
- **April Lawrie**, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (SA)
- **Shona Reid**, Guardian for Children and Young People (SA)
- **Liana Buchanan**, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People (Vic)
- **Meena Singh**, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)
- **Jacqueline McGowan-Jones**, Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)

*NOTE: Specific ANZCCGA Communiques are endorsed by individual members as indicated.