



## **Communique - Meeting 2 and 3 May 2013, Hobart**

The Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG) met in Hobart on 2 and 3 May 2013.

The ACCG aims to promote children's rights and participation and ensure the best interests of children are considered in public policy and program development across Australia.

The meeting began with a welcome to country from Theresa Sainty.

### **National Commissioner for Children**

ACCG welcomed the new National Commissioner for Children, Ms Megan Mitchell, as a new member of ACCG.

The National Commissioner briefed ACCG on her priorities and work to date.

There was discussion about ways in which the appointment of the National Commissioner would provide further opportunities for ACCG views to be heard on national issues of importance affecting children and young people.

### **Moving from out of home care to independence**

ACCG agreed that the issue of young people moving from out of home care to independence would be a standing item on the agenda with a particular interest and focus on early intervention for children and young people with high level needs.

### **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children**

ACCG received a briefing from Ms Helen Bedford from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), on general progress implementing the Second National Action Plan and on areas of particular interest including workforce trends and the National Survey of Children in Out of Home Care. ACCG sought closer liaison with FaHCSIA and those with responsibility for overseeing implementation of the Second Action Plan.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people**

The wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a priority area of interest for ACCG. To progress this work ACCG discussed the wellbeing and treatment of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system. ACCG members agreed to further this work by preparing an Issues Paper on protective factors which would be considered at the next ACCG meeting.

## **Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sex Abuse**

The ACCG received a briefing from Justice Jennifer Coate, Commissioner appointed to the Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sex Abuse.

ACCG discussed ways of assisting the Royal Commission, to ensure that children and young people are made aware of the Royal Commission and that children and young people are involved in the ongoing work of the Royal Commission.

ACCG also discussed ways it could assist the Royal Commission to identify best practice principles and deficiencies in laws and practices.

## **NEST- ARACY National Plan for Young Australians**

Dr Lance Emerson CEO of ARACY briefed ACCG on the progress of the NEST.

## **National Disability Insurance Scheme (DisabilityCare Australia)**

Ms Sue Ham, State Manager NDIS Launch Site Tasmania and Ms Mary Hawkins, NDIS Launch Transition Agency (FaHCSIA) briefed ACCG members on elements of the scheme of particular relevance to children and young people. She noted that children are included in all 6 launch sites being established over the next 3 years, commencing 1 July 2013 in South Australia, Tasmania, the Hunter (NSW) and the Barwon area (Victoria) and commencing 1 July 2014 in the ACT and the Northern Territory.

## **Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

ACCG noted that the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Australia's Fourth Report on Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was discussed by NGOs and Government officials at a Roundtable recently convened in Canberra. ACCG will continue to monitor this process.

## **Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)**

The ACCG agreed that the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People would be invited to become a member of the ACCG when appointed.

## **Psychotropic medication used by children**

The ACCG again discussed the importance of clinical guidelines governing the prescription and management of psychotropic medication to vulnerable children and young people, particularly those in out of home care. ACCG has agreed to discuss the matter further at its next meeting, and will invite representatives from the NSW Department of Health to provide further information.

## **Charter of Rights for Children & Young People in Youth Detention**

The ACCG held further discussions about the development of a Charter of Rights for children and young people in youth justice detention and agreed to discuss a draft Charter at its next meeting.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the ACCG will be held in Sydney in November 2013.

For further information on the ACCG and the work of the Children's Commissioners and Guardians from across Australia, please contact the ACCG National Convenor, Bernie Geary, (03) 86015886.