

27 September 2023

Media statement

Australia's commissioners for children, guardians and advocates call for a respectful dialogue regarding the Voice Referendum

Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates, a collective group dedicated to safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of children and young people across the nation, are urging all Australians to recognise the profound impact that the Voice Referendum has on all youth, particularly on our First Nations children and young people.

WA Commissioner Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, speaking on behalf of the group, emphasised the significance of the Voice Referendum, and stressed the importance of conducting all discussions and debates regarding the referendum with the utmost care, compassion, and mindfulness.

"The words spoken and the manner in which they are conveyed can have a profound impact on children and young people, potentially causing harm," said Commissioner Jacqueline McGowan-Jones.

"Words have the power to heal, but they also have the power to harm," said Ms McGowan-Jones.

"We understand that what is said, and how it is said, can have lasting effects on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of our children and young people. We must ensure that the discourse surrounding the Voice Referendum – and in its aftermath – is respectful and considerate of the profound impact it holds for our nation's future generations."

The Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates call upon all Australians to engage in discussions surrounding the Voice Referendum with respect, empathy and a commitment to building a more inclusive and harmonious society for all – regardless of an individual's plan to vote Yes or No.

For more information about the Commissioner, Guardian or Advocate in your state, visit:

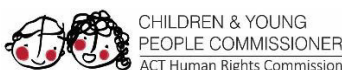
ACT: ACTkids.act.gov.au
 NT: occ.nt.gov.au
 NSW: acyp.nsw.gov.au
 QLD: qfcc.qld.gov.au and publicguardian.qld.gov.au
 SA: ccyp.com.au, cacyp.com.au and gcyp.sa.gov.au
 TAS: childcomm.tas.gov.au
 VIC: ccyp.vic.gov.au
 WA: ccyp.wa.gov.au
 National: humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights

Endorsed by the Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates for Australian children and young people



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Jodie Griffiths-Cook
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Commissioner,
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Nicole Hucks
Acting Children's Commissioner,
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Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and
Young People, South Australia



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About Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates:

Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates are a collective group dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people across the nation. Comprising experts and leaders in child advocacy, they collaborate on initiatives that empower and support children and young people in Australia.

Quotes attributable to the Guardian for Children and Young People, SA:

"In any discussion or debate about controversial topics, respect is key. The way adults speak, write and act has the power to make children and young people feel safe and secure, or afraid and lonely."

"Children and young people watch us and learn from what we say and do. If we want to teach our children to be respectful, listen to other voices and make big decisions in a responsible way, then we need to show them how."

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