

ANZCCGA Joint Statement on action required to address child sexual abuse

3 March 2025

All children and young people are worthy of being protected and cared for, and to have adults take responsibility for addressing issues that impact their young lives.

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) are calling for state/territory and federal governments to focus on solutions that have been proven to work – early intervention, better support services, and community-driven responses will help protect *all* children.

Child sexual abuse is a priority issue for Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates across all jurisdictions. *The Australian Child Maltreatment Study found that 28.5% of all Australians had experienced sexual abuse as a child.* Every day in our work, we see the harm and trauma inflicted on children who experience abuse. It is not an issue specific to only one community – to think so ignores the reality that all children at risk of abuse deserve attention and protection.

Collectively we have heard the powerful stories of victim survivors of child sexual abuse through various Inquiries and Royal Commissions. It is now our duty to honour their courage and experiences by acting on what we have learned and commit unequivocally to transforming our systems and services to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. It is unclear what more another Royal Commission could tell us beyond that which has already been identified through previous studies.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies 2024 report, *Improving the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children*, analyses recommendations from 61 Inquiries and Royal Commissions between 2010 and 2022 into Australia's child protection and youth justice systems. With 3,005 recommendations for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, the report confirms what we as Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates know – there is a deep understanding of the challenges and what is needed to keep children safe but, concerningly, minimal implementation of key recommendations.

Recommendations highlight the importance of collectively mobilising preventative efforts through education and universal health care, while also scaffolding 'at risk' families with wraparound supports. In responding to child sexual abuse, services and systems must be therapeutic, holistic and informed by connection to culture, centering each individual child or young person's needs and voice.

To achieve long-term, sustainable outcomes, solutions must be built in partnership with those who know the challenges best. It is essential for the voices of survivors and communities to be heard, respected, and acted on. Services that are not designed and

delivered from the ground up risk failing to meet the specific needs of children and young people, particularly children at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual abuse.

Communities need to be better resourced to deliver early intervention programs with flexibility to tailor services to the needs of their communities. Community driven solutions have consistently been advocated for when addressing other societal issues such as family violence and suicide. ANZCCGA calls on the government to learn from and implement similar good practice models that embody self-determination in seeking to address the serious issue of child sexual abuse and keep *all* children and young people safe.

However, the work cannot sit solely with community and community organisations. It is also necessary to strengthen and appropriately resource regulatory frameworks to ensure organisations providing services and care to children and young people understand how child sexual abuse happens and implement measures to protect and respond.

Now is not the time for another Royal Commission. Now, we must see action on the countless recommendations that have been made to make sure *all* children and young people are protected from child sex abuse.

Quotes attributable to the group

“Time and time again, we see inquiries and Royal Commissions undertaken with minimal accountability when it comes to the implementation of recommendations.”

“Instead of more reports or inquiries, we need to act on the findings of past reviews and focus on practical, community-driven solutions.”

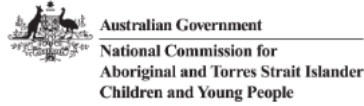
“There is a time and a place for Royal Commissions, this is not it. Prioritising community-led solutions is not a new concept and does not require a Royal Commission to action.”

“Top-down, punitive approaches are ineffective and lose sight of the voices of children and young people and the families and communities they exist in and belong to.”

‘The lack of action on previous inquiry recommendations is evidence of a lack of accountability for the human rights of children in Australia. If governments are serious about protecting children, there must be measures to ensure their accountability to act on the evidence.’



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Commissioner (Aust)



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