



13<sup>th</sup> December 2010

**Playgroup Queensland Submission regarding: Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010**

Playgroup Queensland is the state's peak body for Playgroups and a leading early intervention service provider. The organisation supports families with young children by offering a range of universal, targeted and intensive participation options. It also has a strong focus on community capacity-building, providing a range of training services and resources to support the work of others in this field.

Playgroup Queensland supports families who are vulnerable through a range of targeted and intensive programs, including facilitated Playgroups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, refugee and migrant families, families experiencing social and / or economic disadvantage, young parents and families living with disabilities including mental health illnesses.

Playgroup Queensland is a strong advocate for the rights of the child and therefore strongly supports the introduction of the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010.

We believe that the introduction of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People will improve the status of Australian children by ensuring there is an advocate at a national level for the needs, views and rights of people below the age of 18. This position will further assist our leaders to prioritise children and keep them at the centre of Australian life when developing laws and policies that affect them and their families. Additionally, this position will contribute towards advancing Australia's international obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and bring it into line with practices in New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and England.

In order for the Commissioner to work effectively in this proposed national role, we feel the following factors need to be considered:

- The Commissioner needs to be given appropriate powers and resources to do this very important role effectively, and this could be more clearly defined in the Bill
- The Commissioner's role in relation to the current State and Territory Commissioners needs to be more clearly defined, including accountability, and roles and

responsibilities of these positions both independently and in working collaboratively together

- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may require special mention given the fact that they are currently significantly more disadvantaged than other Australian children. Playgroup Queensland has been supporting and providing facilitated (Supported) Playgroups in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for the last 12 years. We currently support more than 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playgroups including those in the communities of Lockhart River, Woorabinda, Kowanyama and Cherbourg. As such we are a strong advocate for the rights of Indigenous children.

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