



nsw commission for  
children & young people

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing regarding the inquiry into the Human Services (Enhanced Services Delivery) Bill 2007.

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People is an independent organisation that works with others to promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people in NSW. One of the principal functions of the Commission is to make recommendations to government on legislation and policies affecting children.

I am pleased that the Bill addresses a number of matters which may impact negatively on children and young people, for example by providing alternatives for people to establish their identity, making it clear that people are not required to carry the card at all times and introducing offences for people who illegally ask for the card.

However, I am concerned about the accessibility of the card to young people under the age of 18 years. I understand that, while the Bill requires a person to be at least 18 years to obtain an access card, it allows the Minister to grant a class exemption in special circumstances. The Bill's explanatory memorandum states that it is intended that a class exemption be made for young people who require access to Medicare, consistent with the existing system of access to Medicare cards.

I am concerned that the current wording of the Bill does not promote access to young people under 18 years, but instead sends a message that young people are a special category requiring exemption. I am particularly concerned that this approach under the Bill may result in young people under 18 years being unaware of their eligibility to obtain a card, and therefore not being able to access necessary health and social services.

It also seems unnecessarily complicated that the Act specifies a minimum age of 18 years, and that the Minister then gives a class exemption for young people over 15 years. I suggest the Bill be amended so that the age limit is lowered to 15 years. This would also mean that young people under 18 years who are unable to live with their families, or who are in crisis and without other

support, would be able to obtain services such as Youth Allowance, Carer Allowance or Crisis Payment, in a timely manner.

With the Committee's approval, I would like to place a copy of this submission on the Commission's website. Making work such as this publicly available is one mechanism I use to be accountable to children, young people and the Parliament of New South Wales. I would appreciate your consideration of this request at an appropriate time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you require further information please contact Anne Marie Dwyer, Manager, Policy at the Commission on 02 9286 7205 or at [annemarie.dwyer@kids.nsw.gov.au](mailto:annemarie.dwyer@kids.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gillian Calvert".

**Gillian Calvert**  
**Commissioner**  
23 February 2007