

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **A Commissioner for Children and Young People in South Australia becomes a reality**

Community organisations congratulate Parliament on responding to community concerns when securing passage of the amended Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Bill 2016.

While establishing the new roles of Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Child Development Council, the legislation continues the important functions of the Guardian for Children and Young People and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee. It makes central to their work commitments enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ministers Rau and Close responded to community input, and, with the active engagement of members of the Legislative Council, ensured that a significantly improved Bill was passed. Notable contributions were made by MLCs Tammy Franks, Kelly Vincent, Stephen Wade, and Kyam Maher.

The amendments did not extend to the creation of an Aboriginal Co-Commissioner as advocated by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders, forgoing the opportunity to recognise the special circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and helping make sure that their voices were heard.

The legislation will be automatically up for review before it has been in operation for three years and in that time there will be an increased demand for effective recognition of the particular needs and interests of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Organisations that lobbied for amendments include the South Australian Council of Social Service, the Australian Medical Association, the Youth Affairs Council of SA, the Guardian for Children and Young People, the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, the Child and Family Welfare Association, the Council for the Care of Children, and the Law Society.

Reflecting on the passage of the legislation, representatives of these organisations commented:

I look forward to collaborating with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the other oversight bodies as we listen to children and young people to help create a better future for all young South Australians, including those who may come into care or find themselves in youth detention.

*Amanda Shaw, Guardian for Children and Young People*

The opportunity to fully engage children and young people in the selection of South Australia's first Commissioner for Children and Young People is an exciting development which will help to ensure children's interests and rights are front and centre in the Commissioner's appointment.

*Simon Schrapel, Chair, Council for the Care of Children*

YACSA is pleased to see a less prescriptive approach to the participation of children and young people in the work of both the Guardian and the Commissioner for Children and Young People. It is crucial that children and young people are not only consulted but are able to determine the method and nature of their engagement in all aspects of the work.

*Anne Bainbridge, Executive Director, Youth Affairs Council of South Australia*

All of our organisations are committed to collaborating with the Government to ensure effective implementation of the new Act and addressing any problems that may arise in relation to both the new initiatives (the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Child Development Council) as well as the continuing roles of the Guardian for Children and Young People and the CDSIRC.

