



Anne Hollonds

National Children's Commissioner

THIRD YEAR OF TERM

'It is my job to promote child rights and wellbeing as a national policy priority, and ensure that the views of children and young people influence the reform of policy and service systems, especially those living with disadvantage.'

TERM GOALS

- **Recognise** that children are a national priority in Australia.
- **Improve** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety and wellbeing.
- **Strengthen** scrutiny of the legal and policy frameworks to protect children's rights and wellbeing.
- **Identify** innovative solutions through collaboration and partnerships to change the broken child protection and youth justice systems.
- **Improve** resourcing of National Children's Commissioners to fulfill their mandate.

PRINCIPLES / APPROACH

- Applying a human rights-based approach to work.
- Highlighting the experiences and voices of the most vulnerable children.
- Enabling and supporting children's perspectives to be heard and built into policy development.
- Ensuring coverage across the full spectrum of childhood (from newborn to teenagers).
- Always providing an independent perspective that is robust, and evidence based.
- Seeking to build strategic alliances across sectors, including by reinforcing mutual responsibilities for the wellbeing of children.



Commissioner Hollonds (front) celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day with children at the Darrandirra Child and Family Centre, Darwin, Northern Territory.

KEY ACTIVITIES: 2022-23 WORKPLAN

<p>Keeping kids safe and well – your voices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with the Department of Social Services, this project consulted with children, young people and parents with lived experience of disadvantage and vulnerability. It reported their views on how the government can help to keep children, young people and families safe and healthy in their homes and community. This year will focus on continued advocacy around the report to ensure the voices and views of children and young people are applied and used in policy development and service delivery.
<p>Children's Statutory report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues pertaining to children's rights in Australia will be tabled in a statutory report in the Federal Parliament. • This report will include updates on Australia's implementation of the Concluding Observations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2019.
<p>Child rights impact assessment tool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a child rights and wellbeing impact assessment tool which can be applied to proposed legislative changes, and national policy frameworks, plans and strategies. This year will focus on the delivery of a project report and tool for use by legislative and policymakers to assess the impact of legislation and policy on the rights and wellbeing of Australian Children.
<p>National child and family investment strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS has asked the AHRC to undertake research and consultation into best practice in child and family investments, to support the Australian Government's National Child and Family Investment Strategy (Investment Strategy), announced in the 2022-23 budget. This project will occur over a 10-month time period, commencing in June 2022.

<p>Mental health impacts of COVID-19 pandemic children, young people and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with the National Mental Health Commission, the AHRC surveyed children, parents/guardians and grandparents across Australia about the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on them. 4,559 children aged 9–17 years, and 2,796 parents/guardians and grandparents provided survey responses. In their responses to the survey, children, parents/guardians and grandparents, and stakeholders identified some clear areas where we can improve our mental health and wellbeing measures going forward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › increasing awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing › improving mental health and wellbeing support services and programs for children and their families › a greater role for schools in meeting children’s mental health and wellbeing needs › prioritising children and giving them a voice. <p>These key areas are reflected in the eight recommendations made in the report. This year will focus on advocacy around these areas to ensure the voices and views of children and young people are applied and used in policy development and service delivery.</p>
<p>Supporting quality engagement for children and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will occur over three years. It will develop an annual consultation plan with children, young people and families across five national frameworks, strategies and plans, including Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031, National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, Australia’s Disability Strategy, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy. This project will ensure a targeted and coordinated approach to engagement with children and their families which is consistent with international standards of practice.
<p>Systems reform for child health, learning, and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report has been developed through desktop research and workshops to inform the potential design of future initiatives aimed at transforming child protection and youth justice. • This year will focus on continued advocacy for a national commitment to create and implement a long-term roadmap to improve child health, learning and wellbeing in Australia.
<p>National survey of secondary students about the understanding and experiences of consent education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project commences in 2022–23 and will provide a dataset that will: assess awareness and understanding of consent in schools including the extent of consent education; capture and identify the experiences of young people in the understanding, experience, nature and reporting around consent from a child rights and gendered lens. • The project will provide a final report including recommendations for education programs and policies that enhance and protect the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.