

Submission

Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians, and Advocates (ANZCCGA) are a collective body that promotes and protects the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, including by seeking to ensure that the best interests of children and young people are considered in public policy, program development, and decision-making. By working collaboratively across jurisdictions, ANZCCGA seeks to address national and systemic challenges and align policy and best practice service delivery. This submission is being made by Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians, and Advocates (ACCGA) only.

ACCGA raises serious concerns about the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026 and its implications for Aboriginal children, families, and communities in the Northern Territory. ACCGA also notes the potential for this to also impact children and families in communities bordering the Northern Territory, albeit that these are within the jurisdiction of other Australian states.

In a context where Aboriginal children are over-represented in out-of-home care, these changes risk increasing the number of Aboriginal children removed from their families and placed in permanent care, separating them from family, culture, and community. ACCGA considers that the Bill raises substantial concerns regarding the protection of rights, adequacy of safeguards, and consistency with national reform frameworks and associated commitments, including *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* and the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

ACCGA acknowledges that the Northern Territory Children's Commissioner and the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People are best informed to provide a detailed examination and recommendation on this Bill, including by considering the responsibilities of (and potential reform required in) other service systems outside of care and protection. ACCGA recommends that the Northern Territory Government engage their respective offices to support a robust inquiry into the Bill to ensure that any proposed reform promotes and protects the rights, safety, and wellbeing of *all* children and young people in the Northern Territory, and particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

ACCGA recommends that the Assembly does not pass this Bill and instead meaningfully consults with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to develop a proposal for legislative reform that is informed by the principle of self-determination and supported by contemporary evidence.

This statement has been endorsed by the Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians, and Advocates listed below:

National

- *Deb Tsorbaris, National Children's Commissioner*
- *Sue-Anne Hunter, National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (and ANZCCGA Co-Chair)*

Australian Capital Territory

- *Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (and ANZCCGA Co-Chair)*
- *Barb Causon, Acting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner*

New South Wales

- *Katherine McKernan, Advocate for Children and Young People*
- *Rachael Ward, Children's Guardian*
- *Bianca Dufty, Deputy Children's Guardian*

Northern Territory

- *Shahleena Musk, Children's Commissioner*

Queensland

- *Shayna Smith, Public Guardian*
- *Natalie Lewis, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner*

South Australia

- *Shona Reid, Guardian for Children and Young People*
- *Kylie Heneker, Commissioner for Children and Young People*

Victoria

- *Tracy Beaton, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People*

For further enquiries about this submission, please contact ANZCCGA Co-Chairs:

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