

# Pledge by Australia

Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 17 December 1990

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 26 September 2006

Ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography on 8 January 2007



## Pledges

**1.** Australia is building national policy to improve child safety and prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. In particular:

- leading national coordination and implementation of National Principles for Child Safe Organisations to make organisations across Australia safer for children; and
- overseeing the design and implementation of a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, focusing on awareness raising, education and reducing stigma for victims.

**2.** To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia's National Children's Commissioner, Ms Megan Mitchell, will launch her 2019 statutory children's rights report. The Commissioner's Report will include concluding observations made by the Committee on the Rights of Child, following Australia's appearance before that Committee in September this year.

**In light of the commitments we have made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as applicable, we have undertaken the following to highlight our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child in celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention:**

- **What?**

Australia is building national policy to improve child safety and prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. In particular:

- leading national coordination and implementation of National Principles for Child Safe Organisations to make organisations across Australia safer for children; and
- overseeing the design and implementation of a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, focusing on awareness raising, education and reducing stigma for victims.

- **Why?**

Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) was established in response to allegations of historic sexual abuse of children in the institutional context. The Royal Commission handed down its final report in December 2017, following a five year inquiry that included over 8,000 private sessions, 57 public hearings and receipt of over 1,000 written accounts.

The Royal Commission shone a light on the extent of historical child sexual abuse within institutions in Australia. One outcome of the Royal Commission was the need to improve the governance of institutions which work with children. A second and important outcome was for the Australian Government to develop and implement a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.

- **How?**

#### National Principles

Australia's National Office for Child Safety is working closely with state and territory governments and non-government sectors to promote and support implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Implementation of the National Principles will create a nationally consistent approach to child safety that ensures all organisations working and engaging with children and young people across Australia provide a child safe environment, and promote children's rights and wellbeing.

For example, to implement Principle 6, *Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused*, the National Office commissioned the development of, and published, the *Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people*. The Guide provides practical advice to organisations about how to develop, implement and maintain a complaint-handling system that prioritises child safety and promotes the rights of children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them.

#### National Strategy

The Royal Commission recommended (recommendations 6.1 to 6.3 and 10.1), that the National Office for Child Safety lead the design and implementation of a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse with a particular focus on cultural change through awareness raising and education, on ensuring that victims of child sexual abuse are able to access the right supports and at the right time, and on measures which respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours. In keeping with the Royal Commission's recommendations, the National Strategy will consider child sexual abuse in all settings, including institutional and non-institutional settings. It will also include specific consideration of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and regional and remote communities.

Development of the National Strategy is being informed by a co-design approach to ensure that key priorities of relevant stakeholders are addressed. In phase one, the National Office for Child Safety engaged in consultations with a diverse range of stakeholders through co-design workshops and individual consultations from July 2018 to July 2019, which informed the Public Consultation Report. (<https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/child-safety/national-office-for-child-safety-public-consultation-report.pdf>). Stakeholders included survivors of child sexual abuse and their support organisations, academics, clinical practitioners, child safety experts, Commonwealth and state and territory governments, non-government organisations and institutions.

The consultations highlighted the need for the National Strategy to:

1. incorporate education about child sexual abuse and online safety for children, families, the community and professionals
2. create a service system that is trauma-informed, nationally consistent, responsive and properly resourced
3. support cultural change, and build awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse including to reduce stigma and support help-seeking
4. incorporate initiatives directed toward offender prevention including responding to children with harmful sexual behaviours and
5. develop and lead a robust research agenda.

- **When?**

National Principles

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations were endorsed by all Australian governments in February 2019 and work is ongoing to implement these across all jurisdictions.

National Strategy

A National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse is due to be delivered in 2020.

- **Who?**

The National Office for Child Safety within Australia's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is working in collaboration with Australian government agencies, state and territory governments and non-government organisations.

**We have made the following plans to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention:** *(Please provide information, including dates and venues, on any events or activities planned by the State party to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention.)*

The details of further Australian Government celebrations for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 20 November 2019 can be confirmed closer to the date.

Australian Human Rights Commission

To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia's National Children's Commissioner, Ms Megan Mitchell, will launch her 2019 statutory children's rights report. The Commissioner's Report will include concluding observations made by the Committee on the Rights of Child, following Australia's appearance before that Committee in September this year.