

ANZCCGA Meeting Communiqué: 27 – 29 November 2024

From 27 – 29 November 2024, the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) met in Aotearoa New Zealand. Members were welcomed in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington with a pōwhiri (traditional welcome ceremony) onto Waiwhetū Marae by Te Āti Awa. Following the pōwhiri, members engaged in cultural exchange and learning about the work of iwi (tribes) Te Āti Awa and Ngāti Toa Rangatira alongside whānau (families) and their mokopuna (children and young people), and importantly, hearing directly from mokopuna from the iwi. This set the foundation for the exchange of national and international priorities for children and young people across both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

This three day gathering provided ANZCCGA members the opportunity to share their jurisdictional work in promoting and advocating for the best interests of children and young people, and progressing collective action to improve outcomes for First Nations children and young people in alignment with the [ANZCCGA's 11 Advocacy Priorities](#). The following matters were a key focus of discussion for this meeting:

Amplifying mokopuna (children and young people) voices

ANZCCGA members heard from mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand about what matters to them, what inspires them in their advocacy, and actions that Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates should take to support mokopuna on both sides of the Tasman.

Mokopuna spoke to the importance of connection with culture in their lives, the importance of their language (this was particularly highlighted by mokopuna Māori), the power of collective advocacy with both their peers and multigenerational advocates, and inclusive communities for mokopuna of all abilities and backgrounds. In guiding ANZCCGA member advocacy, they stressed the importance of recognising the knowledge and solutions that mokopuna hold.

ANZCCGA members express gratitude and sincere thanks to all of the mokopuna who shared their experiences, views and calls to action so generously with us during our meeting.

Strength in culture and self-determination for First Nations mokopuna

A strong theme across ANZCCGA member discussions, guest presentations, and voices of mokopuna heard during the meeting was the strength that First Nations children and young people draw from connection to culture. Members affirmed the critical importance of supporting mokopuna to grow up with strong cultural identity, within their own families, and supported to learn and live their culture and language. Mokopuna expressed to the ANZCCGA members that culture is a protective factor in their lives, and for the members as independent advocates to do all they can to promote and advocate for the protection of the right to culture for mokopuna in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The South Australian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People shared insights from her presentation to the 17th session of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People (EMPRIP) in Geneva in July 2024, on the topic of Aboriginal self-determination in child protection, with reference to the findings of the *Holding onto Our Future* report.

ANZCCGA members were honoured to hear from the following speakers in relation to this theme:

- Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, sharing insights on decolonising systems for First Nations mokopuna in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

- Peggy Luke-Ngaheke, Manager – Waiwhetū Marae, and Wikitoria Ratu, Operations Manager – Te Kōhanga reo o Arohanui ki te Tangata, on Te Kōhanga Reo movement and the importance and success of Maori-led education for mokopuna Māori.

Age restrictions for social media

Australian members discussed the recent passage of legislation in Australia to impose age restrictions on social media. As this law moves to implementation stage, members highlighted the importance of meaningful consultation with children and young people and considered action that promotes their rights and best interests. Multiple Australian members have prepared and published a [joint statement](#), expressing concerns regarding this legislation.

Other discussion items:

- Roundtable on independent oversight methodologies for the out-of-home care sector, including with Aotearoa New Zealand’s three independent bodies overseeing the Oranga Tamariki System. ANZCCGA members thank Arran Jones, Chief Executive of Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor, and Emma Leach, Senior Assistant Ombudsman – Office of the Ombudsman, for their contributions to this roundtable discussion
- Ensuring young people’s voices are central in youth justice reform, with members acknowledging the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People’s [Hear Me Out Report: Inquiry into Implementation Progress for Banksia Hill’s Model of Care Instruction](#) and the South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People’s report [From Those Who Know: Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility](#)
- Family violence reform which prioritises children and young people’s experiences as victim/survivors in their own right
- Achieving legislative reform to end corporal punishment against children and young people, in both institutional and family settings
- Australia’s human rights framework, and the importance of enshrining the Convention on the Rights of the Child into law at a federal, state and territory level
- Support for the work of Foundations for Tomorrow – in advocating for a focus on future generations policy to overcome short-termism in political and economic decision-making, which disproportionately impacts the lives and futures of children and young people.

Further information about matters raised in this communique can be sought from the ANZCCGA Co-Chairs:

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Communique signatories – 27 – 29 November 2024

- Dr Claire Achmad, Chief Children’s Commissioner (NZ)
- Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)
- Shona Reid, Guardian for Children and Young People (SA)
- Helen Connolly, Commissioner for Children and Young People (SA)
- Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (ACT)
- Isabelle Crompton, Interim Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas)
- Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People (Vic)
- Shahleena Musk, Children’s Commissioner (NT)
- Shayna Smith, Public Guardian (Qld)
- Zoe Robinson, Advocate for Children and Young People (NSW)

NOTE: Specific ANZCCGA Communiques are endorsed by individual members as indicated.