

25 June 2018

Ms Megan Mitchell  
National Children's Commissioner  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney NSW 2000

Email: [kids@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:kids@humanrights.gov.au)

Dear Ms Mitchell,

**RE: Convention on the Rights of the Child**

I refer to the roundtable in Darwin where you were discussing and collecting views on Australia's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would like to add material to a specific issue raised during the consultation, after information provided to me in Alice Springs recently in regard to child specific services to children who accompany their mothers to women's shelters.

At the roundtable the absence and lack of therapeutic programs and child specific workers to work with children accompanying their mothers to women shelters escaping domestic and family violence was discussed.

The Alice Springs Women's Shelter (ASWS) provides residential services to on average 1150 women a year. Accompanying the women around 500 children a year of which forty (40%) are boys under 12.

Previously the ASWS had funding to employ a children's worker who had numerous aspects to their job, including counselling, connecting and co-ordinating external services for children and families, running in house programs and activities

Whilst the children are at ASWS it is an opportunity to work with them to address their trauma and commence healing from the impact of violence in their lives. However it is also a unique opportunity to intervene and provide education and modelling of respectful relationships.

I was advised that at present it is the way funding is provided to shelters that is an impediment to children's workers being employed on site to address the individual

needs of children in the environment that they feel safe and take up the opportunity to break the cycle.

The best practice is to provide co-ordinated assistance, education and programs on site where children are and where there is the most potential that all relevant information is available.

Whilst funding in the past was via Territory Families and Federal Funding there is no further Federal Funding available in the very stretched funding environment shelters who provide of acute services to ensure immediate family safety,

Funding and adequately funding women's shelters to provide assistance to thousands of children that accompany women escaping domestic violence is essential to deal with the children's' trauma and commence healing and assist long term health and wellbeing for Australia's most vulnerable children. It should also be part of Australia's domestic and family violence prevention approach to take the opportunity to provide education and assistance with the aim of breaking the cycle when children are in shelters.

Yours sincerely,



Sally Sievers  
Anti-Discrimination Commissioner