The Non-Government (Alternative) Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Australia was one of the first countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child about 15 years ago, in January 1990. One of the obligations for a country under the Convention is regular reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on implementation and compliance with the Convention. Australia is in the process of reporting for the second time. The Australian Government sent its latest written report to the UN Committee in mid 2003 and will be meeting with the Committee in September 2005 to discuss its progress.

As part of this process, non-government organisations also have the opportunity to present an 'alternative' report giving their perspective. This Report was presented to the UN Committee in Geneva in June 2005. Each of these reports is prepared in light of the Observations made by the UN Committee following the first reporting process.

The Non-Government Report represents the contributions of and consultations with hundreds of people including young people, workers and academics across the country. Those working with children and young people included those in indigenous and ethnic organisations, churches and charities and workers in schools, early childhood centres, foster and residential care, youth centres and legal centres. The consultation process took over two years and involved every State and Territory.

The Report was written by a team of volunteers, academics and authorities drawing on the material gathered and the issues identified and also reflected on the findings of other major inquiries including the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission reports that examined the situation of Indigenous children, children in immigration detention, and children involved in the legal system.

The Report seeks to balance the concerns at the neglect and failures of Government policy and practice in many areas with the need to acknowledge positive developments and to encourage commitment on the part of government and the community sectors to finding solutions. It makes a number of recommendations (105 in all) designed to draw on the knowledge and resources that already exist for Australia to improve its care, support and protection for its children.

The Report is available on the websites: ***http://www.ncylc.org.au/croc/consultpaper.html*** and ***http://www.dci-au.org/html/news.html***

The Australian Government Report is available at: ***http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/WWW/agdHome.nsf/Page/Publications_Publications_2003_Australia's_Combined_Second_and_Third_Reports_under_the_Convention_on_the_Rights_of_the_Child***

The UN Committee Observations from the first reporting process in 1997 are available at: ***http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/3d744477ea59fdaf8025653200508bb8?0pendocument***

The UN Committee has asked the Australian Government to address the List of Issues set out at: ***http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/list/CRC.C.Q.AUS.3.pdf***

A Summary and Key Issues Table is also available on the National Children's and Youth Law Centre's website. Printed hard copy versions of the Report are available for ***$25*** *from the Centre plus $5 postage and handling.* ***Contact ncylc@unsw.edu.au or 02 9398 7488 to order copies****.*

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