



27 July 2016

Media Release

THE VALUING CHILDREN INITIATIVE AGAIN CALLS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A NATIONAL MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND FUTURE GENERATIONS FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION INTO JUVENILE JUSTICE.

One thing that we must take from the abhorrent events at the Don Dale Centre, is the Prime Minister's public acknowledgement that the culture and prevailing attitudes of a society plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.

Valuing Children Initiative Convenor Linda Savage said that questioning underlying assumptions about how we value children in Australia is more urgent than ever following the outcry about the treatment of children at the Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre.

How we value children is critical to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children in Australia and directly impacts on attitudes, action and behaviour towards children.

Nothing has provided a starker contemporary example of this, said Ms Savage, than the shocking revelations of sexual abuse of children by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

It has revealed that children, the laws in place to protect them, and even the adults who spoke out, were no match for the prevailing culture and attitudes that were generally not to believe a child, put the protection of institutions first and enabled perpetrators to resist scrutiny for decades.

During the recent federal election the VCI had called on the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Greens Leader Richard Di Natale to commit to making children's safety and wellbeing a greater priority through the:

- 1) Creation of a Ministerial Portfolio for Children and Future Generations.
- 2) The instigation of a rigorous and transparent process to ensure that legislative and decision making processes consider the impact on children and future generations with risk analysis for particularly vulnerable children that is evaluated and reported on.
- 3) The convening of at least one meeting per year of Federal, State and Territory Ministers to discuss policy development across portfolios for children and future generations, and;
- 4) the funding of community raising activities to inspire Australians to value all children, understand that a child's wellbeing is the responsibility of the entire community and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations.

Ms Savage said the VCI is again calling on party leaders to consider innovative ways to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children is at the forefront of considerations.

Across the world, governments and communities are looking at new ways to ensure children and future generation's needs and interests are explicitly taken into account, notwithstanding their lack of political or economic influence. Ms Savage cited the work of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations at Oxford University and the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.

Mr Tony Pietropiccolo, Director of Centrecare who established the Valuing Children Initiative with Basil Hanna CEO of Parkerville Children and Youth Care, said that Australia's children are incredibly precious and deserve every opportunity to flourish. Mr Hanna said that this is of importance to every single Australian because our children are our nation's future and should therefore be given the highest priority by our nation's leaders.

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The Valuing Children Initiative is an ambitious project that seeks to inspire Australians to value all children, understand that a child's wellbeing is the responsibility of the entire community, and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations. It was established by Centrecare (Inc.) and Parkerville Child and Youth Care (Inc.) in January 2016. Copies of the Valuing Children Foundation Paper are available by emailing: eking@centrecare.com.au
