

27 September 2023

\*For Immediate Release\*

## Media statement

### **Australia's commissioners for children, guardians and advocates call for a respectful dialogue regarding the Voice Referendum**

Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates, a collective group dedicated to safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of children and young people across the nation, are urging all Australians to recognise the profound impact that the Voice Referendum has on all youth, particularly on our First Nations children and young people.

WA Commissioner Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, speaking on behalf of the group, emphasised the significance of the Voice Referendum, and stressed the importance of conducting all discussions and debates regarding the referendum with the utmost care, compassion, and mindfulness.

"The words spoken and the manner in which they are conveyed can have a profound impact on children and young people, potentially causing harm," said Commissioner Jacqueline McGowan-Jones.

"Words have the power to heal, but they also have the power to harm," said Ms McGowan-Jones.

"We understand that what is said, and how it is said, can have lasting effects on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of our children and young people. We must ensure that the discourse surrounding the Voice Referendum – and in its aftermath – is respectful and considerate of the profound impact it holds for our nation's future generations."

The Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates call upon all Australians to engage in discussions surrounding the Voice Referendum with respect, empathy and a commitment to building a more inclusive and harmonious society for all – regardless of an individual's plan to vote Yes or No.

For more information about the Commissioner, Guardian or Advocate in your state, visit:

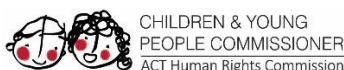
ACT: [ACTkids.act.gov.au](http://ACTkids.act.gov.au)  
 NT: [occ.nt.gov.au](http://occ.nt.gov.au)  
 NSW: [acyp.nsw.gov.au](http://acyp.nsw.gov.au)  
 QLD: [qfcc.qld.gov.au](http://qfcc.qld.gov.au) and [publicguardian.qld.gov.au](http://publicguardian.qld.gov.au)  
 SA: [ccyp.com.au](http://ccyp.com.au) and [cacyp.com.au](http://cacyp.com.au)  
 TAS: [childcomm.tas.gov.au](http://childcomm.tas.gov.au)  
 VIC: [ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://ccyp.vic.gov.au)  
 WA: [ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)  
 National: [humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights](http://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights)

*Endorsed by the Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates for Australian children and young people*



OFFICE FOR ACT ABORIGINAL  
& TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
KEEPING OUR KIDS STRONG  
IN FAMILY & CULTURE

**Barbara Causon**  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Children and Young People  
Advocate,  
Australian Capital Territory



**Jodie Griffiths-Cook**  
Children and Young People  
Commissioner,  
Australian Capital Territory



**Nicole Hucks**  
Acting Children's Commissioner,  
Northern Territory



COMMISSIONER FOR  
ABORIGINAL CHILDREN  
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**April Lawrie**  
Commissioner for Aboriginal  
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South Australia



**Helen Connolly**  
Commissioner for Children and  
Young People, South Australia



**Shona Reid**  
Guardian for Children and Young  
People, South Australia



**Leanne McLean**  
Commissioner for Children and  
Young People, Tasmania



**Anne Hollands**  
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**Nicholas Dwyer**  
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**Luke Twyford**  
Principal Commissioner,  
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Commission



**Natalie Lewis**  
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and Child Commission



**Liana Buchanan**  
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**Meena Singh**

Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People Victoria

**Shannon Thorne**

Advocate for Aboriginal Children and Young People  
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**Zoë Robinson**

Advocate for Children and Young People  
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Commissioner for  
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**Jacqueline McGowan-Jones**

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**About Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates:**

Australia's children's commissioners, guardians and advocates are a collective group dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people across the nation. Comprising experts and leaders in child advocacy, they collaborate on initiatives that empower and support children and young people in Australia.

**Quotes attributable to the Commissioner:**

"The words spoken and the manner in which they are conveyed can have a profound impact on children and young people, potentially causing harm."

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"We understand that what is said, and how it is said, can have lasting effects on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of our children and young people. We must ensure that the discourse surrounding the Voice Referendum – and in its aftermath – is respectful and considerate of the profound impact it holds for our nation's future generations."

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