



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20 November 2019

Thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Celebration of World Children's Day

**Statement by H.E. Mr Mitch Fifield
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the
United Nations**

(As delivered)

Mr President, Australia is deeply committed to making sure children realise their full rights. At home and abroad.

This is one of the sacred trusts of Member States.

Today is a great and welcome initiative. A forum to hear the views of children.

Mr President, the good news is most Australian children enjoy high levels of participation in education, access to high quality health, and have safe homes and communities.

We are committed to empowering children through our strong public institutions, ensuring access and equity for all, without discrimination.

But Mr President, it is important, especially in our online and connected world, to protect and maintain a safe space to allow kids to be kids. It is why the Australian Government established the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. And backed it up with a legislated world-first children's cyberbullying take down regime.

The Commissioner has the power to direct the tech platforms to takedown offending cyberbullying material with severe penalties for failure to do so.

As the challenges for children change, so must the tools to protect them, and to ensure the enjoyment of their rights. None is greater than the right to live as a child.

But Australia acknowledges that some children still face barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights. We are working to support children facing particular challenges. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders children, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, LGBTI children, and those living with family instability and stress.

Hearing children's voices is essential to inform the work of our governments and improve the wellbeing and opportunities for children in Australia, and globally.

State and territory governments have a range of initiatives to support children to have a say on the issues that matter to them, and to participate in government decision-making.

And our new Commonwealth Minister for Youth is supported by a taskforce within the Department of Health. That taskforce is actively considering a range of mechanisms for improving the participation and engagement of children and young people within government decision-making.

In addition, Australia's first independent National Children's Commissioner has held consultations with over 28,000 children since her appointment in 2013. To hear directly from them about the issues that affect their lives now and into the future. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has also been conducting a series of community visits and conversations with Indigenous women and girls around the nation.

Each year Australia appoints a Youth Representative to the UN. Australia's twenty-first Youth Representative addressed the General Assembly at the beginning of October and shared his thoughts and discussions with young Australians about their hopes and dreams for their future.

Australia is committed to addressing the challenges that prevent some of the young people in our country from fully realising their rights. We are committed to realising those hopes, and supporting children to reach their

full potential, and to be the great citizens and contributors we want them to be.