



***Joint media release: SACOSS, Australian Medical Association (SA), Youth Affairs Council of SA, Child and Family Welfare Association of SA, and Council for the Care of Children***

## **Will the Child Safety Bill save even one child from the child protection system?**

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SACOSS and the AMA(SA), together with expert stakeholders, have criticised as inadequate the draft Children and Young People (Safety) Bill ahead of submissions for comment closing this Friday 27 January.

These organisations are joining together to speak up on behalf of the State’s children and young people because they believe that the Government’s current suite of proposed reforms will not achieve the significant transformation needed to support families and prevent the harm of our state’s youngest citizens.

A key issue of concern is that the draft legislation does not put sufficient emphasis on harm prevention. Despite the government’s rhetoric about the importance of prevention, the Bill is effectively limited to responding to harm once identified, and has missed a golden opportunity to mandate provisions aimed at keeping children safe from harm. It also fails to address significant challenges for the state’s child protection system, for example regarding specific measures to provide for the safety of Aboriginal children and young people, and their over-representation in the system.

SACOSS CEO Ross Womersley said, “This legislation does not articulate a vision for prevention in its purpose. It is focused on harm minimisation and the Government’s response once abuse or neglect has already occurred.”

AMA(SA) spokesman Dr Michael Rice, a paediatrician who has been advocating for better support and services for children for decades, stressed that “it appears that the ambulance is still at the bottom of the cliff – this is terribly disappointing.”

“In ***A Fresh Start***, the government said ‘prevention will always be the best solution’, but their actions so far do not support their words.”

“The Government has committed to establishing an Early Intervention Research Directorate. But we need to see action right now. Each reform initiative that does not see prevention as a vital part of the picture is a lost opportunity”, said Dr Rice.

Rob Martin, Executive Director of the Child & Family Welfare Association of South Australia said, “Prevention and early intervention needs to feature much more strongly in the legislation, and there needs to be a focus on supporting families to provide safe environments for their children. It is imperative that we work alongside Aboriginal organisations to effectively support Aboriginal families and communities to keep their children safe, and this must be legislated for.”

Youth Affairs Council of SA Executive Director Anne Bainbridge said, “Policy development and service quality is improved when children and young people participate in decisions that affect them. Referencing the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in the draft Bill is a good start but the government must ensure children and young people are actively involved at both an individual and systems level and are a fundamental part of the reform process”.

Council for Care of Children Chair Simon Schrapel said, “we have a great opportunity to redefine how we protect children from harm but the legislative, funding and system changes have fallen short. A failure to adequately invest in better supporting vulnerable families to care for their children will only result in a further ballooning in the number of children coming into and remaining in state care.”

The SA Council of Social Service, with the Australian Medical Association (SA), the Child and Family Welfare Association, the Youth Affairs Council of SA, and the

Council for the Care of Children have united to call on the Government to rework and build on the Children and Young People (Safety) Bill to ensure bold changes occur as a part of child protection reform.

**For further information or comment, please contact:**

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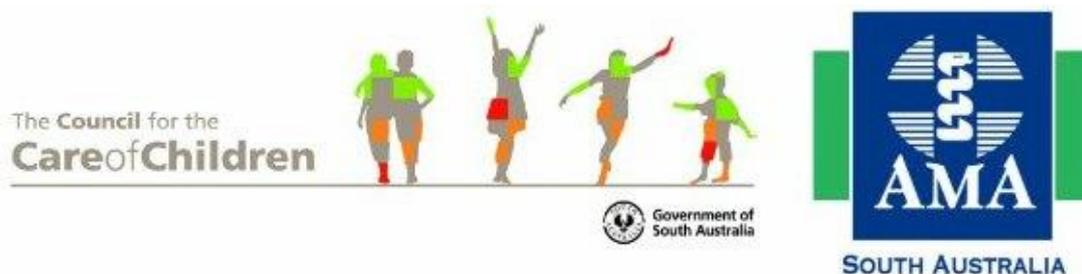
Eva Driscoll, Director of Policy and Communications, on 0401 286 608

Anne Bainbridge, ED of YACSA, on 0417 863 089

Rob Martin, ED of CAWFA, on 0438 821 918

Simon Schrapel, Chair of the Council for the Care of Children, on 0411 643 132

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The original media release can be accessed at:  
<https://www.sacoss.org.au/will-child-safety-bill-save-even-one-child-child-protection-system>