



Child Safety Bill Gets a major Facelift and will be Accompanied by Australia's First Early Intervention Legislation

The Council for the Care of Children has welcomed changes made by members of the Legislative Council to amend the Children and Young People (Safety Bill) to ensure it is better placed to protect the interests of South Australian children and families.

Simon Schrapel, Chair of the Council, said "The Opposition, Greens and members of the cross bench in the Legislative Council has assisted the Government to craft an improved Bill that has addressed some of its glaring deficiencies. Whilst far from being a model or a contemporary piece of legislation, the Bill as amended by the Legislative Council will provide a better platform for the delivery of services aimed at maintaining children living safely within their families by requiring the provision of family support and reunification assistance before their removal into out of home care."

Mr Schrapel said "The greatest challenge confronting South Australia today lies less in the performance of our child protection authorities but more in our inability to assist families under stress to adequately care for and protect children and young people. As the State with the lowest level of expenditure per child on family support and preservation in Australia, something had to be done to right this imbalance. Amendments made by the Legislative Council will help to ensure future governments vastly improve assistance to families and in doing so help to stem the rising tide of children being removed into out of home care at significant long term cost to their wellbeing and to the South Australian economy.

However, of potentially even more significance is Minister Malinauskas commitment on behalf of the Government promising a new Bill will be introduced to Parliament later this year. This new Bill will legislate for the provision of early intervention and prevention services specifically aimed at helping families to reduce the risk of harm to children and

young people and enhance their healthy development and wellbeing. This may be some of the most progressive reform in Australia and acknowledges that turning around our ailing child protection system ultimately will only be possible if there is a concerted effort to help families and communities fulfil their responsibilities to protect and help in the development of our children and young people.

The Council, as part of the alliance of agencies that have advocated over many months to bring about major reform to the Bill, stands ready to play its part with the broader community to help shape this early intervention legislation and accompanying policy over the coming weeks and support its passage through Parliament this year.

Contact: Simon Schrapel AM, Mob: 0411 643 132