



For immediate release Friday 24 October 2014



Focus Must Be On What is Good For Children and Families

The debate in South Australia about the role and functions of a Commissioner for Children and Young People has reached a stalemate in SA Parliament.

Child and Family Welfare Association of South Australia (CAFWA), the peak body for the not-for-profit non-government child protection services in South Australia, is calling for the Government and Opposition to break the present stalemate and bring together the best of the Government's proposal and the Opposition's individual member's Bill.

'It is a shame and certainly not in the interest of children and families for an important issue such as this to become a political football, but both initiatives could improve our child protection system', said Albert Barelds, Executive Director of

CAFWA.

The Government is proposing not only the establishment of a Commissioner, but also is committed to the establishment of a broad based body - the Child Development Council - to work with the Commissioner and report on and maintain an 'Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People.

If operating as envisaged it has the potential for a long-term positive impact on all children and young people.

The Opposition Bill has a more narrow focus on only establishing a Commissioner for Children and Young People, however a position with extensive powers and responsibilities.

The Commissioner is proposed to be fully independent and can not only hold decision makers to account on a systemic level, but also is empowered to investigate complaints, including individual matters.

Mr Barelds continued,

"To those working in the child protection sector it is obvious that much more openness and accountability is required to ensure that at all times our policies, practices and systems, both in government or non-government services are child and family-focused, ensuring that children are cared for in a way that allows them to reach their full potential".

"To make progress and get true innovation in child protection services, there needs to be a level of independence when giving advice on what may have gone wrong or what will need to change".

"Without a Commissioner becoming completely bogged down in the investigation of individual complaints, it is also abundantly clear that some limitations need to be set regarding what a Commissioner will or will not investigate".

"Let's think about what is good for our children and grand children and then there is no doubt in my mind that we can find a way to reach the middle ground with children and their families becoming the winners", said Mr Barelds.

For further information/comment, contact:

Albert Barelds CAFWA Executive Director 0439 878 120

*Copyright © *2015* *Child and Family Welfare Association*, All rights reserved.*

Our mailing address is:

Marjorie Black House
47 King William Street
Unley SA 5061

