

# ACT Children & Young People Death Review Committee

Ms Megan Mitchell  
National Children's Commissioner  
Australian Human Rights Commission

via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Mitchell

As Chair of the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee (CYPDRC) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to contribute to Australia's report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

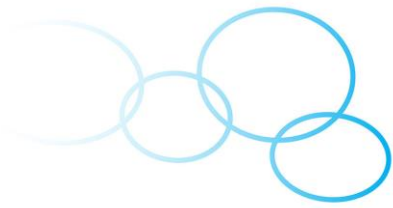
The CYPDRC is established under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* to work towards reducing the number of deaths of ACT children and young people. To assist with this aim, we keep a register of all the deaths of ACT children and young people who die before they turn 18. This information is used to learn more about why children and young people die in the ACT and to work towards reducing and preventing deaths of ACT children and young people.

The CYPDRC relies on timely and accurate data in order to carry out this work. The CYPDRC believes that one of the major impediments to the preventative work it undertakes is the quality and accuracy of the available data in both the ACT and across other jurisdictions. The CYPDRC would like to highlight the following challenges related to data collection and data coding concerning child death:

1. There is inaccuracy of death certificates and an understanding of the causes of deaths.
2. There is no recognised child death classification system and ICD-10 is extremely limited.
3. There is a lack of a national framework establishing data standards to ensure consistency in reporting.

The accurate identification of cause of death in children and young people and the subsequent coding has far reaching consequences in the area of prevention and postvention across the ACT and other jurisdictions. In particular suicide and drownings have come to the attention of the CYPDRC as not being accurately recorded for reasons that may include, inexperienced doctors, the stigma associated with suicide, and a lack of time to provide enough detail on the death certificate. This has considerable implications because:

- the correct cause of deaths may be significantly underreported across Australia,
- researchers are unable to identify trends and patterns and contributing factors,
- child death committees are unable to identify areas requiring further research,
- recommendations about legislation, policies, practices and services for implementation by government and non-government bodies are not being supported by accurate data and therefore may not be assessed as an issue that requires focus and/or change.



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The CYPDRC would also like to highlight the need for key systems that work to support and protect children and their families to ensure that they take the views of children and young people into account. The CYPDRC is of the opinion that there remain considerable barriers to children and young people participating in processes about issues that affect them, particularly for younger children. Ensuring safe environments continues to be a principal consideration so as to ensure children and young people are safe and free from violence, abuse and neglect.

The ACT is fortunate that a relatively small number of deaths of children and young people occur each year. Nonetheless, the CYPDRC find that the children and young people who come to their attention are some of the most vulnerable children and young people who do not have the same opportunity to thrive as other children in Australia. The CYPDRC is of the opinion that there remains a need to identify and focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable children and young people. I look forward to the findings of your report and progress made towards recognising and ensuring the rights of children and young people in Australia.

Sincerely

Ms Margaret Carmody  
Chair  
ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee

23 May 2018