

## **Kidsafe Australia's Submission on Australia's progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

While the efforts of the Australian Government to implement previous recommendations as laid out by the Convention of the Rights of the Child is commendable, there is progress to be made in the area of injury prevention. (Cluster 7 Articles 24 and 27; Cluster 3 Articles 3 and 6).

Unintentional injury remains the leading cause of severe injury, hospitalisation and death to children in Australia.<sup>1</sup> A recent national report<sup>2</sup> highlights that child injury hospitalisation rates have **not changed** over the past decade, which is unacceptable. This is despite concerted, under-resourced campaigns by prevention advocates who have managed to ensure that injury rates have not increased over this period. The impact of injury on the child and family is long-lasting, and can be associated with increased incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,<sup>3</sup> poorer education outcomes and financial cost both for the family and community<sup>4</sup> (Cluster 8 Articles 28, 30 & 31). In Australia for 2014-2015 there were 34,624 patient days in hospital due to injury for young children (aged 0-4 years).<sup>5</sup> **Serious injury is preventable.**

A **national plan of action**, led by the Australian Government is needed, to include comprehensive data linkage for child injury surveillance and the implementation of effective child safety programs (Cluster 3 Article 2; Cluster 4 Article 13). The 'state of the nation' in child injury has plateaued under the work of concerned leading experts, stakeholders and advocacy groups. This prompted calls from a coalition of over 30 organisations, assembled under a single alliance, for the creation and implementation of a national framework led by the Australian Government.<sup>6</sup>

Kidsafe echoes the comment in Paragraph 14 of the concluding Observations from the Sixtieth Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, that coordination continues to be lacking across the Australian jurisdictions. Speaking to Cluster 7 Article 24, Kidsafe advocates for strategies as outlined by the Childhood Injury Prevention Alliance (CHIPA). This includes: conducting assessment of the impact of child injury; developing a national injury prevention framework; utilising evidence to inform implementation plan; ensuring State and Territory components are included in action plan; undertaking continual high quality injury surveillance; and engaging in ongoing process, impact and outcome evaluation.<sup>6</sup> A national child injury prevention framework must be re-established and coordinated, to appropriately understand this important health issue and allocate urgently needed resources.

Kidsafe acknowledges that the Australian Government allocated \$0.9 million over three years to create a national framework to reduce the risk of injury for Australian children with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.<sup>7</sup> This sum is not commensurate or proportionate to the child injury rates and health expenditure each year in Australia.

The data that is currently available does show inequalities and inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and other Australian children.<sup>5</sup> The generational impact of colonisation and discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families plays a significant role in the disparity of injury rates.<sup>8-9</sup> Determinants of health such as access to affordable, safe housing,

early childhood education and family support, must be included in any plan that focuses on injury prevention (Cluster 7 Articles 26 and 27). The proposed national framework for injury prevention must take this into account and call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This call should include effective evaluation of injury prevention programs.

Further, research indicates there is a gap in effective consultation and meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in all stages of program development and implementation.<sup>10</sup> This is yet another urgent need.

### **In summary, Kidsafe Australia advocates for:**

- Developing a national plan of action led by the Australian Government;
- Ensuring that all State and Territory Governments are held accountable for child injury prevention;
- Utilising comprehensive data linkage for child injury surveillance;
- Implementing evidence-based child safety programs including direct contact with parent and carers on a grassroots level.<sup>11</sup>
- Identifying priorities, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- Incorporating effective consultation and meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in all stages of program development and implementation; and
- Reorienting health services towards the consistent and continual use of preventative approaches.

### Contact

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