

Cited and said ...

"... This detailed, wide-ranging and lengthy report of over 770 pages containing 286 recommendations will now be circulated to the States and Territories and to all relevant Federal Ministers and Departments for consideration of its recommendations.

"As acknowledged in the Report, the delivery of many children's services are the responsibility of the States and Territories and the recommendations also cover issues which are directed at various courts and non-government organisations.

"Consideration of the wide-ranging recommendations covering the legal process, education, health, social security and community services will require time and coordination and I am writing to my Commonwealth, State and Territory colleagues to ensure wide circulation, consultation and deliberation of the report."

**Attorney-General Daryl Williams,
news release,
November 19, 1997.**

"... The report raises questions about serious deficiencies in the treatment and protection of children. It is not necessarily right in all its conclusions. But it deserves to be taken seriously ..."

**'Child report demands WA review',
The West Australian, editorial,
November 21, 1997.**

"... This report is the first that has taken a comprehensive, national look at what we are really doing for children. Australia has recently been criticised by the international community for not doing nearly enough, given our relative prosperity and sophistication. These recommendations are our best hope to make a difference. The Government's response will be keenly monitored. Does the coalition really care about children, or does it just like mouthing fuzzy talk about families?"

**'Lifting the lid on our forgotten children'
Moira Rayner, National Children's and Youth
Law Centre,
The Age, opinion pages,
November 20, 1997.**

"... the recently released report from the Australian Law Reform Commission entitled *Seen and heard: priority for children in the legal process* ... is a damning indictment of the treatment of young offenders in the Northern Territory.

"... The Law Reform Commission report says that the mandatory sentencing laws in the Northern Territory and Western Australia breach a number of international human rights standards and common law principles ... I have stated before in relation to another matter that I do not believe this parliament should be used to override the laws of any state or territory, but I certainly do believe that the Northern Territory parliament should repeal these mandatory sentencing laws and the continuing injustice they are causing, particularly for young offenders - and the sooner, the better."

**Senator Bob Collins (ALP, NT),
parliamentary debate on a Democrats motion condemning mandatory sentencing,
December 1, 1997.**

on Seen and heard

"... The commissions called for an urgent national summit on children, giving special attention to child abuse, broken families, homelessness and suicide. We support their call. The problems described in the report are depressingly familiar, as are the failures of the systems that try to deal with them. It is long past time that we developed a national approach to the care of children and to their treatment in the court system ...

"The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, should also accept the recommendation for an Office for Children in his department ..."

'Taking children seriously'

The Age, editorial,
November 21, 1997.

"...While John Howard and his ministers decide which of the inquiry's recommendations to follow - they include a laudable suggestion for an Office of Children - the most important implication from this report is that we as a society simply have to make young people a greater priority ..."

Associate Professor Michael Carr-Gregg,
spokesperson for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital
Herald Sun, opinion pages,
November 25, 1997.

"... I will make some observations in respect of the comments of the Australian Law Reform Commission. The members of that body are not elected. This parliament is elected. This parliament enacts legislation. If the people of Queensland do not like the legislation enacted by this parliament, once every three years, unlike the Australian Law Reform Commission, we are accountable to the people.

"I respect enormously the sovereign rights of the parliaments of this country. The sovereign rights of the parliaments of this country to make the law must not be undermined by appointed bodies or by international United Nations conventions. If the Law Reform Commission goes down this track, as it has on a number of issues, it will be further proof that it increasingly sees itself as another tier of government.

That is wrong and that is irresponsible ..."

Queensland Premier Rob Borbidge,
State parliamentary question time,
November 20, 1997.



"... One thing this report will do is help to dispel the myth that there is some sort of juvenile crime wave sweeping the country. All too often, politicians bereft of ideas or the more sensationalist elements of the media fall back on the hardy old perennial of 'kid-bashing', painting a doomsday scenario of feral teenage hordes sweeping through the city streets, looking like extras out of the next 'Mad Max' film ..."

Senior Children's Magistrate of NSW, Stephen Scarlett
launch of *Seen and heard*
December 4, 1997.

"At a time of unusually heightened public concern for the welfare of children, the report of the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on children and the legal process might seem rather narrowly technical ...

"The report is, however, thorough in its examination of the way children are dealt with in the legal system - as plaintiffs seeking to assert their rights, as witnesses seeking to be heard and believed, as defendants charged with crimes and as the pawns in broken marriages."

'The law and children',
The Sydney Morning Herald, editorial,
November 20, 1997.

"... (T)he report is much more than a catalogue of the many ways in which government, the law, its mechanisms and its allied services have failed children in Australia. It contains constructive steps that should be taken ...

"... I disagree with the report's suggestion that the proposed office (for children) should be responsible for monitoring Australia's compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ... Logic dictates that the task should be located in a properly resourced, statutory authority: an organ of Parliament not Government. In short - a Commonwealth commissioner for children ..."



'The voice of our future must not go unheeded'
The Hon Justice Alastair Nicholson,
Chief Justice of the Family Court of
Australia,
The Age, opinion pages,
November 20, 1997.