



**9 July 2025**

**To: The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600**

**Subject: Request to Establish a National Taskforce on Child Sexual Exploitation –  
Response to UN Special Rapporteur Findings**

**Re: National Response to the Findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale  
and Sexual Exploitation of Children**

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you following the release of the report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, which identifies systemic shortfalls in Australia's protection of children. The report underscores the pressing need for a nationally coordinated response to uphold our human rights obligations and ensure that no child is left behind.

As the founder of Away from Keyboard Inc., a charity dedicated to preventing harm, I urge the Australian Government to implement a coordinated and timely national response to the findings and recommendations presented by Special Rapporteur Mama Fatima Singhatheh during her official visit to Australia.

Away from Keyboard Inc. promotes awareness of the UN system, with a particular focus on the Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW, Rights of the Child and the broader human rights treaty framework. We advocate on matters concerning online protection from harm, gender equality, and the rights of marginalised groups, with a view to advancing Australia's alignment with UN principles. My organisation represents civil society, academia, and advocacy groups that engage regularly with international human rights mechanisms and UN treaty monitoring bodies. Our work amplifies the voices of women and children at risk, particularly those facing intersecting forms of disadvantage. We also facilitate collaboration between civil society, academic institutions, and government bodies, particularly those with ECOSOC accreditation.

While acknowledging the progress made under initiatives such as the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse and the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, the Rapporteur's findings reveal structural and operational gaps that must be addressed. These concerns have been consistently echoed in concluding observations from treaty monitoring bodies, including CEDAW and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, underscoring the need for cohesive national implementation. These actions would also strengthen Australia's positioning in

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future reviews by international human rights treaty bodies, including the Universal Periodic Review and forthcoming reporting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These reforms would complement and reinforce existing national efforts, including the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022–2032) and Australia's Cyber Security Strategy. Inaction would likely compound long-term social, economic, and institutional costs of child exploitation, with consequences for systems of care, justice, and public safety. Research from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has shown the long-term costs of trauma, justice intervention, and intergenerational harm run into the billions, costs that could be significantly reduced through coordinated early prevention and systemic reform.

We call for the immediate establishment of a **Prime Minister's Taskforce on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children**, to be co-chaired by federal departments and guided by a multi-sector expert panel. This taskforce should coordinate national implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and include representation from state and territory governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, civil society, digital safety experts, and lived experience advocates. Soroptimist International Australia seeks formal inclusion in this taskforce to help ensure alignment with Australia's UN commitments. We recommend the Taskforce be convened within the next six months, with clear terms of reference, inclusive membership, and a reporting deadline aligned with Australia's upcoming human rights treaty body reviews. This taskforce could align with existing efforts under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031, serving as a specialised vehicle for implementing the UN Special Rapporteur's recommendations and embedding them into a broader national strategy.

## **Thematic Priorities and Recommended Measures**

The following thematic priorities summarise urgent areas for reform, including legislative inconsistencies, digital harm escalation, systemic service gaps for vulnerable children, and the need for stronger data and oversight mechanisms.

### **A. Legal and Systemic Reform**

#### **1. National Legal Framework**

**Finding:** Inconsistent legislation across states and territories results in uneven protection for children.

**Proposed Action:** Introduce a Federal Children's Act to standardise legal definitions

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and protections, and to fully incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.

## **2. Integrated Data Collection**

**Finding:** There is an absence of a centralised national database on child sexual abuse cases and outcomes.

**Proposed Action:** Develop a unified, disaggregated data system accessible across jurisdictions to inform policy and service delivery.

## **3. Criminalisation of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)**

**Finding:** Legislative responses to the production and distribution of CSAM, including AI-generated and peer-produced content, remain inadequate and inconsistent.

**Urgent Measure:** Amend relevant legislation to ensure comprehensive criminalisation, introduce uniform penalties, and expand resources for detection and enforcement. Prioritise survivor-centred support pathways.

## **4. Age of Criminal Responsibility and Detention Standards**

**Finding:** Children under 14 remain subject to criminalisation and inappropriate detention conditions.

**Legislative Priority:** Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 and withdraw Australia's reservation to Article 37(c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **5. Minimum Legal Age of Marriage**

**Finding:** Australia permits marriage under the age of 18 in exceptional circumstances, creating pathways for coercion and child trafficking.

**Legislative Priority:** Amend national legislation to prohibit all forms of marriage under the age of 18, without exception, in accordance with international human rights standards and best practice under CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **B. Protection and Care for At-Risk Children**

### **6. Residential and Out-of-Home Care**

**Finding:** Children in care face elevated risks, including trafficking and repeated absences.

**Proposed Action:** Establish an oversight framework, increase access to therapeutic services, and support culturally informed care models led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### **7. Service Access for Marginalised Populations**

**Finding:** Children from Indigenous, refugee, migrant, and disability backgrounds face heightened vulnerability and under-service.

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**Urgent Measure:** Scale culturally safe, linguistically accessible, and disability-informed services across all jurisdictions.

## **8. Long-Term Victim Support**

**Finding:** Recovery services are fragmented and short-term in nature.

**Proposed Action:** Invest in trauma-informed, community-based housing and rehabilitation services co-designed with lived experience and First Nations voices.

## **C. Digital Safety and Emerging Technologies**

### **9. Online Exploitation and Technological Threats**

**Finding:** Existing safety mechanisms are insufficient to respond to online grooming, sextortion, and technology-facilitated exploitation.

**Urgent Measure:** Expand the regulatory and investigative capacities of the eSafety Commissioner and ACCCE. Promote preventative education, particularly youth-informed campaigns.

Away from Keyboard Inc. is committed to supporting the Prime Minister's Taskforce and contributing to a collaborative, expert-led national response. With decisive and coordinated action, Australia can advance its role as a global leader in child rights and demonstrate its commitment to upholding international human rights standards. With your leadership, Australia can not only respond to the findings at hand, but also position itself as a global standard-bearer in child protection, digital safety, and rights-based policymaking.

We are prepared to provide supporting documentation, including a summary brief, policy recommendations, and a stakeholder engagement strategy, to assist the Taskforce in its initial formation. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with key partners and stakeholders already working in this space.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to contributing further to the proposed national response.

Yours sincerely,

*Sarah Barnbrook*

Sarah Barnbrook  
Away from Keyboard Inc.  
Founder

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