



Australian High Commission
Colombo



MEDIA RELEASE

Australian High Commission marks the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

20 November 2014

On the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australian High Commissioner Robyn Mudie said “Today we commemorate 25 years since the world committed to upholding children’s rights. The convention remains important in ensuring every girl and boy can live a healthy life with access to education and without fear of violence, abuse or neglect”.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has four guiding principles: non-discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child.

“Australia takes its obligations under the Convention very seriously, and has made considerable progress in protecting and promoting children’s rights”, Ms Mudie said.

Australia has a *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020* which outlines a long-term, national approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children in Australia. Australia has also appointed a National Children’s Commissioner, and reformed laws to strengthen penalties for child exploitation offences such as slavery and sex tourism.

Linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has a *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022* which aims to help Australian women and their children live in safe communities, free from violence. “Violence against women and children undermines a country’s social fabric and prevents women from achieving social and economic equality”, Ms Mudie said.

Ms Mudie also commended Sri Lanka for its progress protecting the rights of children – including reducing the number of children who die from preventable causes, increasing the number of children who stay in school, improving children’s access to safe water, and significantly reducing the risk of landmines.

Australia supports Sri Lanka in many of these areas, including contributing LKR 3.8 billion to help improve access to a quality education for primary and secondary students across the island. This includes increasing access to education for girls so they have equal opportunity to attend school and develop skills to build their own futures.

Australia is providing child-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure for 118,000 children, and has helped to clear over 74 square kilometres of land contaminated as a result of the conflict. Australia has also helped to improve the livelihoods of 2,100 families by providing poultry packages to female-headed households, allowing women to earn an income from home, while providing a good source of nutrition and a safe environment for young children.



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But there is more to be done. Under-nutrition remains a significant concern, as is the need to prevent child sexual abuse and build children's awareness and resilience against disasters.

"Australia is committed to continuing to protect the rights of children, Ms Mudie said. "But protecting children is everyone's business. We all have a role to play in ensuring our children have a safe and prosperous future."