



Briefing from Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa

Introducing ACYA:

Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) seeks to promote respect for all children and youth and their rights. In order to do this, we

- a) promote understanding and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)
- b) promote action on the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for Aotearoa New Zealand
- c) provide reports from non-governmental organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
- d) promote opportunities for the voice and participation of children and youth to be heard.
- e) do anything else that will further these aims

ACYA's vision is an Aotearoa New Zealand where the rights of children and young people (up to 18 years) are upheld and embedded in law, policy, practice and wider society.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE ABOUT REAL THINGS ...

Children's rights are about real things like education, health, having an adequate standard of living and being well cared for. They are about treating children with respect and listening to them, recognising that children need love, guidance and support from their families, opportunities to play and be with friends, and to be valued as part of their communities

ACYA proposes this Government use children's rights, based on UNCROC, to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to decision-making affecting children and young people.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECT AND PROMOTE WELLBEING

Using UNCROC to protect and promote the wellbeing and inherent dignity of all children will enable common ground for discussing and developing policies and practices for children.

About the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

When New Zealand ratified the UNCROC in 1993, it was hailed as a touchstone for children. The hope was that *"The Convention will help ensure that the interests of the children are fully considered in the future"*¹. As signatories to UNCROC, Aotearoa NZ has an obligation to be mindful of children. UNCROC is a mechanism for factoring children's interests into decision-making and it provides opportunities to engage in dialogue nationally and internationally about how to ensure children reach their potential and have safe, fulfilling childhoods.

¹ Media release from the Minister of External Relations and Trade, 13 March 1993

Monitoring our compliance with UNCROC:

ACYA produces and presents the civil society, alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN Committee). We are the country focal point under the parallel NGO/government reporting process. Our role is to raise awareness of the issues which prevent children and young people fully enjoying their rights.

ACYA's last [civil society report](#) was in 2015/16, Aotearoa NZ's 5th periodic report under UNCROC.

Areas for urgent attention:

In 2016, the UN Committee were concerned that some children, particularly children with disabilities, Māori, Pacific and migrant and refugee children face significant barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights.

The UN identified **six areas as requiring urgent attention:**

1. Violence, abuse and neglect
2. Children deprived of a family environment
3. Standard of living
4. Children belonging to minority and indigenous groups
5. Child labour
6. Juvenile justice

In all, the UN made over [50 recommendations](#) as to how Aotearoa New Zealand could improve implementation of UNCROC, enabling children and young people to access justice and claim their rights. A number of points in the coalition government's 100-day plan are supported by the UN Committee's recommendations

What we want:

ACYA recommends that Aotearoa NZ implements and embeds UNCROC to protect and promote the wellbeing and inherent dignity of all children. This will require:

- More **consistent and complete data** about children;
- **Greater cohesion and co-ordination** between legislation, policy and practice as well as across sectors and agencies;
- **Universal and proportionally targeted responses** so all children's needs are met;
- **Spending that is planned**, enacted and accounted for in a manner that advances children's rights.

ACYA calls for:

- a **comprehensive plan** to implement UNCROC and its' two optional protocols
- the establishment and resourcing of a **permanent mechanism to co-ordinate** UNCROC implementation.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE A POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

The mainstreaming of children's rights is a deeply political project with potentially transformative consequences for the way in which children are view and engaged with by all actors in society (Tobin, 2011, cited in Smith, 2016, p. 164).