



DNI Defensa de los Niños Internacional

DCI Defence for Children International (Australia)

DEI Défense des Enfants International

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE DCI-A ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

4:00pm 24 November 2005

at The National Children and Youth Law Centre
32 Botany St Randwick NSW
and
The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
Level 2, 172 Flinders St, Melbourne Victoria

DCI-A has contributed over the last year to the debate on a number of national issues and some international issues in relation to the rights of children and young people via the submissions it has prepared for state and federal inquiries, letters, the articles in *Australian Children's Rights News*, and its role in international congresses and forums relating to juvenile justice and the UN process in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The main issues on which DCI-A has informed the debate and advocated for children's rights include:

- Child abuse, child pornography and the internet
- The treatment of children and young people seeking asylum
- Access to assisted reproductive technologies
- Children of prisoners
- Child protection
- Juvenile justice
- Australia's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Prominent DCI-A members Past-president Danny Sandor, former Chief Justice of the Family Court, Alastair Nicholson and Dr John Tobin have prepared a number of submissions on areas such as the terrorism legislation, and the Suspended Sentences Interim Report (the "Interim Report") in Victoria.



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The major work that DCI-A was involved in during 2004-5 was the preparation and presentation of the second Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning Australia's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. DCI-A collaborated with the National Children's and Youth Law Centre (NCYLC) and a National Steering Group and National Advisory Group to consult on and prepare the Non-Government Report. A consultation paper and a background paper were prepared and consultations were held in collaboration with the community legal centres network in most states. The final report was drafted, reviewed and edited by a number of people across Australia with expertise in specific areas. A number of DCI members including Richard Chisholm, Moira Rayner, Simon Quilty, Barbara Rogalla, Danny Sandor and Judy Cashmore made very substantial contributions to writing and editing sections of the report, and DCI-A is very appreciative of their contribution. The report was printed and is available in hard copy and on both DCI-A's website at <http://www.dci-au.org/html/news.html#croc> and the NCYLC's website <http://www.ncylc.org.au/croc/consultpaper.html> .

Contributions by DCI-A members also were very helpful in helping to pay for the costs of preparing and printing the report, and in supporting the five-strong delegation who presented the report and participated in the pre-sessional working session in Geneva in June 2005 before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Support from UNICEF and Oxfam and several other donors were also much appreciated. Megan Davis and Judy Cashmore also returned to Geneva again in September 2005 with support from UNICEF and Oxfam to observe the Australian Government's presentation to the Committee.

The thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the UN Committee's Concluding Observations provide some indication of the value of the non-government contribution.

Again on the international scene, DCI-A was fortunate that Helen Bayes was invited to address the DCI International Conference, Bethlehem June, 2005 to overview the work of Defence for Children International in protecting the rights of "Kids Behind Bars". Helen founded Defence for Children International in Australia in 1993 and was awarded the Human Rights Medal in 1999 by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in recognition of her outstanding contribution. Her paper was reprinted in Australian Children's Rights News in July 2005.



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Acknowledgments

DCI (Australia) is very appreciative of the accommodation and office assistance at very minimal cost that the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) provided over a number of years. DCI-A has now moved to the National Children's and Youth Law Centre office at the University of New South Wales, and again we are very appreciative of their offer and assistance.

Again particular thanks are due to several people who continue to keep the wheels of the organization turning:

- First, to Helen Mattick, a long-standing and loyal volunteer based in Canberra who continues to keep our books in order and deals with the correspondence and membership subscriptions etc. I am very grateful for her wonderful work and cheerful willing assistance.
- Second, to our webmaster, Mr. Chris Cody of Webenter, for maintaining and updating our website www.dci-au.org. Chris has also continued to provide the electronic formatting for the *Australian Children's Rights News (ACRN)* beginning with the September 2001 issue. He has done this cheerfully for a number of issues on an honorary basis but we now pay him a small honorarium at rates that accommodate our limited resources.
- Danny Sandor who has again taken up much of the work of preparing and editing *Australian Children's Rights News* together now with Anne Stonehouse. We will need to set up a small subgroup to work on *Australian Children's Rights News* in future.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the National Committee. All of us are "time-challenged" because of our other work and family commitments so I know it has been difficult at various times to commit the time and energy to another avenue but your contribution is much appreciated. We are instituting a wider consultation process with members of DCI-A through electronic means so will endeavour to include people on email exchange and draw on the skills and interests of the broader membership group. We will need to be alert to the impact of legislative and policy reforms at the federal level in relation to industrial relations, welfare to work changes and the anti-terrorism and will need all our resources in the coming year.

Judy Cashmore

2004-2005 President DCI-A.