

16th October 2025

Via consultation page

Dear Review team,

Review of Charter of Victims' Rights

I am pleased to provide this submission from Save the Children and 54 reasons. Save the Children is a global organisation that exists to uphold children's rights. 54 reasons is our Australian delivery identity – our name refers to the 54 articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This submission is based on our perspective as Australia's leading child rights organisation and our long-term experience delivering rights-respecting services in Queensland. We bring a holistic perspective to the Queensland Charter of Victims' Rights, reflecting our work across the state with:

- Children and young people, as victims of crime and victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, and when they themselves are at risk of using violence or being in contact with youth justice systems
- Adult victims of crime, including victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence
- Families of both groups.

Our domestic, family and sexual violence services include: early intervention and specialist services working with women, children and male users of violence; the refuges we operate across the state; and directly supporting victims of crime through our SHIELD support service for males aged 14 years or older who have experienced sexual violence and as a partner in delivering the statewide VictimConnect service. Our youth justice services include early intervention, family engagement, bail support, throughcare and post-detention programs. We are also a provider of the national 1800RESPECT and Leaving Violence Program services.

Our main recommendations, with more detail below, are:

1. The Charter should better reflect international human rights principles.
2. The Charter should better protect the rights of children and young people who are victims, including through a child-specific version of the Charter.

We draw particular attention to the direct insights from children and young people, about protecting their rights as victims, that are included later in this submission.

1. The Charter should better reflect international human rights principles

International human rights principles provide comprehensive guidance to balance the important considerations that are relevant to protecting victims' rights. The Charter should fully reflect human rights principles.

Victims' access to justice

Key principles for protecting victims' rights arising from international guidance include:¹

- Victims should be treated with compassion and respect for their dignity.
- Victims should be able to access justice, including appropriate recourse and remedies, and redress for the harm they have suffered.
- Victims should be informed of their rights.
- Victims should receive all necessary assistance, support and services, taking into account all relevant individual needs and especially where additional support is needed.
- Processes should respond to victims' needs.
- Victims should be informed of the progress of proceedings and have the opportunity to provide their views.
- Victims' privacy and safety should be protected, including protection from intimidation and retaliation.
- Inconvenience to victims should be minimised.
- Unnecessary delay in legal processes should be avoided.
- Informal dispute resolution mechanisms should be used where appropriate, including restorative justice processes.
- Redress in the form of restitution or compensation from offenders, responsible third parties and/or the state to victims should be provided for where appropriate.
- Police, justice, health, social services, education and other relevant agencies should receive training about responding to victims' needs.

Comparing the current Charter against these principles, the key implication is that the Charter should be strengthened to better protect victims' rights. We support changes to strengthen the Charter and/or its operation including:

- Include introductory language in the Charter and/or the *Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Act 2024* to guide the application of the Charter. This should include:
 - The Charter should be interpreted and applied consistently with international human rights principles.
 - The Charter should aim to promote equity and address the particular and intersecting barriers that some victims face in accessing their rights.
 - The Charter should aim to support victims to exercise agency, choice and control in how they access their rights while minimising risks of harm including secondary victimisation and re-traumatisation.
 - Victims' rights should be supported and upheld in ways that take into account all relevant individual needs, including gender, sexuality, race, cultural background, age,

¹ A more comprehensive list of principles is set out in the United Nations *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*.

socio-economic status, disability, geographic location, Indigenous status and the nature of the crime.

- Strengthen the existing “right to be treated with courtesy, compassion, dignity and respect, taking into account a victim’s needs”. This should include explicitly recognising that victims have a right to be treated in ways – and receive assistance, support and services – that reflect their individual needs and circumstances including gender, sexuality, race, cultural background, age, socio-economic status, disability, geographic location, Indigenous status and the nature of the crime.
- Ensure visa status is not a barrier to victims of domestic, family and sexual violence accessing their rights and appropriate support, including those who are on temporary visas.
- Strengthen the existing right to make a victim impact statement, to ensure victims are informed of this right and have adequate time if they wish to make a statement. Currently, victims are often informed of their right to make a statement only two or three days before the relevant court process. This is not enough time and is not a trauma-informed approach.
- Ensure victims are informed of their rights. Currently, many victims do not understand or know their rights. For victims from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, this is exacerbated by the lack of resources in appropriate languages. This is also true of people with disability and people with minimal literacy.
- Ensure victims whose rights are not upheld are properly informed and supported in navigating the complaints process. Currently, victims are often not informed of their right to complain to the Office of the Victims’ Commissioner and generally are not encouraged to make complaints. Where victims are informed of their right to make a complaint, they are usually directed to internal complaints processes – generally Queensland Police Service. QPS’s complaints system is not perceived as a victim-friendly system or one that is supported by adequate education of QPS about the Charter or victim’s rights.

All these considerations have specific relevance to children and young people who are victims – we provide more detail about this below.

Victims’ rights as human rights

The fundamental basis for recognising victims’ rights is respect for human rights. As such, victims’ rights should be protected in a way that reflects the balanced and interdependent nature of human rights as a whole. This must include ensuring protections for victims’ rights do not inadvertently breach the important rights of those accused or convicted of crimes.

This balance has particular significance for children in contact with the justice system. Most children and young people who are in contact with youth justice are themselves victims of violence and crime and have their own rights in that capacity. Children also have specific rights in the criminal justice system that are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to some extent directly recognised in Queensland law.

Accordingly, it is particularly important that the Charter’s wording and operation is reviewed with an awareness of the rights of children and young people who are in contact with the justice system. Great care should be taken to ensure that stronger protection of victims’ rights is implemented consistently with the fundamental rights of children and young people in the justice system.

2. The Charter should better protect the rights of children and young people who are victims

Children and young people (aged up to 18) who are victims have specific rights and particular needs that are not currently recognised or protected by the Charter.

To address this, we recommend:

- Developing a **Charter of Child Victims' Rights** (preferred option), or
- Revising the Charter to **explicitly recognise children's specific rights and needs**.

In either case, the Charter should explain children's rights as victims in child-friendly terms and include children's specific rights and particular needs, such as:

- Guaranteeing the availability of child-friendly and developmentally appropriate mechanisms, resources, assistance, support and services so that children understand they have rights and what their rights are and can access those rights
- Supporting the critical role of families, caregivers and other trusted adults in enabling children to access their rights, including equipping protective parents and caregivers to advocate for their children's rights and supporting protective parents to care for their children (and avoiding children being removed from their care)
- Recognising that children who are victims of violence and crime often start from a position of distrusting police, courts, government agencies and the justice system, and addressing and responding to this is essential to enabling children to access their rights.

Children's and young people's views about their rights as victims

At 54 reasons, we recognise children and young people's unique expertise in matters relating to them. Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously in all decision-making that affect them. This includes a right to participate in processes such as the current review of the Charter.²

In line with this right, we request that this review take into account insights from 54 reasons Young Advisors who have relevant experience and expertise relating to victims' rights and children's rights.³ All the insights and direct quotations that follow are from consultation undertaken in October 2025 to inform this submission and the review of the Charter. We trust these insights from children and young people – in their own voices – will be heard and acted on.

Why we should recognise the rights of children and young people as victims

Rights restore children's sense of dignity, agency and safety

"The rights for victims give them back a sense of humanity and a feeling of safety after a crime was committed on them."

"Rights give victim[s] power and control back after being powerless."

Children who are victims have specific needs

"[Children and young people] are more vulnerable when it comes to dignity, the need for support, and are overall less informed. This is due to having less life experience, so as victims, they are impacted a lot more severely."

² United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12.

³ 54 reasons Young Advisors are young people aged 13-18 who are employed to advise us about decisions at a governance and a practice level, drawn from our programs and the communities where we work.

“Young people are likely to need to rebuild their trust, and if adults treat them with compassion and respect, it makes it easier for them to talk about what happened but also be more open to support.”

Rights help prevent victim-blaming of children

“Sometimes victims can be blamed and to avoid this there needs to be some form of rights to ensure that it doesn't happen.”

Children knowing their rights is important

“Children and young people shouldn't even be experiencing violence, so it helps when they know their rights to support them during procedures and undergoing legal matters.”

“Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and victims should know what their rights are so that they feel supported in a way that they can understand their situation.”

“Children and young people should be informed on rights as in some crimes people are manipulated (or groomed) into believing what is happening to them is normal.”

Parents and guardians are important supporters

“Child rights should be told to the guardians as well so they know how to support the child or young person as the child [or young person] won't be able to support themselves.”

What is needed for children and young people to access these rights

Accessible and developmentally appropriate services

“Supportive adults who listen and do not judge, as well as safe spaces where children can access private and comfortable places, for example NOT a cold office. Also, someone to properly explain things.”

“Given the resources to get support such as counsellors. And making them accessible/free either in person or online.”

“Having a counsellor or someone you can trust to talk you through or about the situation you're in.”

“Websites are helpful. To get your own information at your own pace and to understand what happened to you in a safe space of your choosing.”

Trauma-informed support

“For me to get help I needed to feel a sense of safety, knowing I wouldn't be judged for how my trauma progressed into other aspects of my life.”

“Acknowledging their trauma and their fear. Talking to the part of them that was hurt, giving that part of them that support so that smaller part of them doesn't feel alone.”

“Never questioning their story if that isn't your job. Listen and understand their story without questioning details or making them feel like a liar.”

Support to understand that what happened to them is wrong

“To understand what was wrong. I refused for years to believe what happened to me, and when I got information about trauma responses I was finally able to at least admit to myself, if not others.”

“Children and young people should be given the information and a talk to about why they are a victim and what was wrong with what happened to them.”

Information about childrens' rights – as victims and more broadly

“Increased awareness and education about these rights, firmer laws and legislations placed and practised.”

“All [children and young people] should be taught about rights throughout schools in most grades from 5-10 at least.”

Current work by the United Nations on children's access to justice

We also draw attention to the current work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to develop authoritative guidance about children's right to access to justice, through a new 'General Comment' that will soon be finalised. The Charter's treatment of child victims' rights should be guided by the important principles provided by the draft new General Comment,⁴ including:

- Children have a right to access to justice and to an effective remedy.
- The child's best interests should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them, and all mechanisms should demonstrate they have effectively considered the best interests of the child.
- Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously – in other words, the right to participate – which includes a requirement that opportunities to be heard are safe, meaningful and voluntary.
- Mechanisms must be available, accessible and adapted to children.
- Avoiding unnecessary delays and protection of privacy and confidentiality are particularly important when children are involved.
- Children have the right to access to information in a manner they can understand – this requires the development of child-friendly information and material.
- Multidisciplinary, coordinated and holistic support should be made available to children to enable them to access their rights.
- All procedures must be specifically designed for children, including being trauma-informed and designed to support children's agency while protecting and safeguarding them from harm including secondary victimisation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. We would be happy to discuss these matters further, including how we could assist with the development of the proposed Charter of Child Victims' Rights. Please don't hesitate to contact me if we can provide any further information.

Kind regards,


Rebecca Ketton

Acting Director – Queensland

54 reasons

Direct Tel: 

Email: 

⁴ The draft General Comment on children's right to access to justice and to an effective remedy is available from the UN's website. Direct link: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/crc/cfi-gc27/crc-gc27-public-consultation.docx>.