



nsw commission for  
children & young people

The Hon Joe Hockey MP  
Office of Access Card  
Department of Human Services  
PO Box 3959  
MANUKA ACT 2603

Dear Minister

I am writing regarding the exposure draft of the Human Services (Enhanced Services Delivery) Bill 2007 for the Australian Government access card.

I am pleased that the exposure draft of the Bill addresses a number of matters which may impact negatively on children and young people, for example by providing alternatives for people to establish their identity, making it clear that people are not required to carry the card at all times and introducing offences for people who illegally ask for the card.

However, I am concerned that under the exposure draft of the Bill young people can not be issued with a card until they are 18 years of age unless they have an exemption from the Minister or Secretary. This provision is inconsistent with current Australian Government policy. For example, the Health Insurance Commission can issue young people with Medicare cards from the age of 15 years without their parent's consent and young people living away from home can directly receive Youth Allowance from the age of 16 years. I understood from our meeting in May 2006 that the introduction of the Bill would not change any of the current policy settings within the Australian Government's human services.

As it is compulsory to present the access card to receive services or benefits, this restriction in the Bill will significantly impact on young people's access to essential health services and income. If a young person does not have their own card they may not be able to get access to their parent's card either because they are not living with their parents or they are embarrassed to ask their parents for the card if it is a personal health issue. In addition, some parents may be reluctant to give their child their card given the significant amount of information stored on it.

The Commission recommends that the Bill be amended to allow young people to be issued with an access card from the age of 15 years, consistent with current Australian Government policy in relation to Medicare cards.

If your office would like to further discuss these matters please contact Vanessa Ford, Senior Policy Officer, at the Commission on 02 9286 7208 or at [vanessa.ford@kids.nsw.gov.au](mailto:vanessa.ford@kids.nsw.gov.au)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian Calvert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Gillian Calvert**  
**Commissioner**  
**12 January 2007**