



The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP  
Attorney-General  
Federal Member for Greenway  
PO Box 8525, BLACKTOWN NSW 2148  
Via Email: [michelle.rowland.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:michelle.rowland.mp@aph.gov.au)

Dear Attorney-General,

**Re: Request for a National Inquiry into Systemic Child Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harm**

Australia continues to face serious systemic failures that result in child sexual abuse and exploitation. Recent cases across institutional settings, from early education and health services to policing and out-of-home care, highlight critical, ongoing vulnerabilities. At the same time, the scale and severity of online exploitation and child sexual abuse material (CSAM) production is growing at an alarming rate, with recent cases involving sexual extortion of teenagers and international abuse networks operating within Australian jurisdictions.

While the 2012–2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse fundamentally reshaped our understanding of institutional failure, we are now facing a broader and more complex challenge. The landscape of harm has evolved. Institutional abuse continues, but is now compounded by digital exploitation, the weaponisation of social media, cross-border offender networks, and growing evidence of coordinated CSAM production within Australia.

Since the Royal Commission, multiple inquiries, including the recent Tasmanian Commission of Inquiry and reviews in Queensland and Victoria, have revealed failures to implement past recommendations or adapt to emerging threats. Moreover, critical regulatory mechanisms, such as Working with Children Checks, reportable conduct schemes, and child safe standards remain inconsistently applied or inadequately enforced across jurisdictions. The absence of a national accountability mechanism has left systemic gaps unresolved.

We are calling for a new, forward-facing National Inquiry into systemic child sexual abuse, exploitation, and harm. This inquiry must extend beyond institutional responses and examine:

- The rise in child sexual abuse material production within Australia, including patterns of organised abuse and online sexual extortion.
- Emerging typologies of harm, including hybrid online and offline offending, familial and network-based abuse, and the grooming of vulnerable young people through digital platforms.

- The adequacy of national coordination in law enforcement, intelligence-sharing, and prosecutions across jurisdictions.
- Implementation and enforcement of child safe standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms post-Royal Commission, including WWCC, reportable conduct schemes, mandatory reporting laws, and oversight bodies.
- Systemic weaknesses in workforce regulation and accountability — including how failures in screening, disciplinary actions, and professional registration enable individuals to access child-facing roles such as early education, health services and care settings.
- Access to justice and support for victim-survivors, including timely access to specialist services and trauma-informed pathways.
- The interface between state/territory child protection systems and Commonwealth responsibilities, particularly for children with disability, in out-of-home care, or on temporary visas.
- The capacity of current systems to detect, disrupt and prevent serial and high-harm offenders.

This must be a coordinated, trauma-informed and future-focused national response. We cannot afford to repeat the failures of the past, or to believe that the work of protecting children is complete.

We look forward to working with the Australian Government its ongoing commitment to child safety through the establishment of this inquiry. Our nation's children deserve nothing less than systems that are equipped, resourced and held accountable to keep them safe.

Yours faithfully,

**Katherine Berney**  
Executive Director  
Working with Women Alliance

**Professor Michael Salter**  
Director  
Childlight UNSW