

# ACT Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Submission to the ACT Government 2024-25 Budget Consultation

## **Phased Banning of Corporal Punishment of Children in the Home**

### **Introduction:**

In the ACT, it remains legal for a parent or carer to physically punish a child in the home. This submission advocates for law reform to prohibit corporal punishment and a corresponding public health campaign to raise awareness about its harmful effects and provide alternative parenting strategies.

### **Evidence and Rationale:**

Extensive scientific evidence and global consensus demonstrate the detrimental impact of corporal punishment on children's physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. It can lead to increased aggression, anxiety, depression, and other negative outcomes. Furthermore, it violates children's fundamental rights to protection from harm and dignity.

International experience shows that when countries prohibit corporal punishment and educate the public about its adverse effects, while providing alternative parenting strategies, the use of corporal punishment decreases significantly. Legal reform is a crucial first step in changing attitudes and behaviors. To date, 65 countries have successfully implemented such bans, aligning with international human rights standards and best practices in child protection.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals explicitly call for ending all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly urged countries to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including the home.

## **Proposed Actions:**

### **1. Law Reform:**

- Amend relevant legislation to clearly prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home.
- Establish a comprehensive legal framework that protects children from all forms of violence, including physical punishment.
- Develop clear guidelines and protocols for reporting and responding to suspected cases of child abuse, including corporal punishment.

### **2. Public Health Campaign:**

- Launch a sustained public awareness campaign to educate parents, caregivers, and the wider community about the harmful effects of corporal punishment and promote positive parenting strategies.
- Provide accessible resources and support services for parents and caregivers seeking alternative discipline methods.
- Collaborate with community organizations, schools, and healthcare providers to disseminate information and support positive parenting practices.

### **3. Phased Implementation:**

- Adopt a phased approach to the implementation of the ban, starting with awareness raising and education initiatives.
- Gradually introduce legal sanctions for non-compliance, allowing time for behavior change and support for parents.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the ban and adjust strategies as needed to ensure the protection of children's rights.

## **Budget Implications:**

The proposed actions will require financial resources for law reform, public education campaigns, and the provision of support services. However, the long-term benefits of

preventing child abuse and promoting children's wellbeing far outweigh the costs. Investing in prevention is a cost-effective strategy that saves lives, improves health outcomes, and reduces social and economic burdens.

**Conclusion:**

By taking proactive steps to prohibit corporal punishment and promote positive parenting, the ACT Government can demonstrate its commitment to protecting children's rights, improving child wellbeing, and creating a safer and more nurturing environment for all children.

**We urge the ACT Government to prioritize this critical issue in the 2024-25 Budget and allocate adequate resources to implement these recommendations.**

*The ACT Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*