

Program Report: Understanding and Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Date: Friday, 26 June 2025 **Time:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM **Venue:** Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Organising Partners: Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) & Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), UNSW Sydney

Participants: 25 refugee community leaders and members from STARTTS Youth Team

Project Background

DTP and STARTTS have been collaborating together to build the human rights knowledge and advocacy skills of diverse refugee and migrant community leaders in Sydney. This half day program on children's rights continues that collaboration.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989, is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Its 54 articles establish the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child — defined as any person under the age of 18 — regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or background. Australia ratified the UNCRC in 1990, thereby assuming binding obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of all children within its jurisdiction.

Despite this commitment, children from vulnerable backgrounds continue to face significant barriers to the full realisation of their rights. Policy gaps, lack of cultural understanding about children's rights, systemic inequities and racism, and insufficient awareness among decision makers, parents, community leaders and members can undermine children's rights.

This training is a step toward addressing this gap by building knowledge, fostering cross sector dialogue, and promoting a child rights-based approach across diaspora and refugee community groups. If community leaders know about their rights, and the rights of children in their communities, they are more able to claim them and to advocate for them in their interactions with government, officials and service providers.

Trainers, Speakers and Participants

Lead Trainer

The main trainer of the training workshop was Louisa Yasukawa, Advocacy and Policy Manager at UNICEF Australia. Here, she leads advocacy on birth registration and the early years. She works with decision-makers across government to protect children's rights in Australia, amplify their voices, and promote evidence-based, child-centred policymaking in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Louisa is also Co-Convenor of the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, comprised of over 100 advocates, service providers and experts providing exceptional insight into the training workshop.

Keynote Speaker

Rev. Bill Crews, Founder and Chairman at the Rev. Bill Crews Foundation was a distinguished speaker at the training workshop, delivering a keynote address, drawing on decades of humanitarian work. Further, participants present ranged from being a part of STARTTS, the Rev. Bill Crews Foundation and a range of refugee and diaspora advocacy organisations.

Participants

There were 25 refugee community leaders and members from STARTTS Youth Team present at this Training Program. Of those participants many came from either a migrant, refugee or diaspora community and it was incredible to see such a rich diversity in the room. It must be understandably noted that some participants present did not wish to share their background, of those who disclosed, our diverse participant cohort included people from: Sudan, Chile, Peru, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Of our participant cohort, there was a diverse range of advocacy organisations present which is incredible to contribute to a vast network of fierce human rights advocates. Some of the organisations present include: STARRTS, The rev. Bill Crews Foundation, AUP Youth, Afghan Peace, Chaldean League, Australian Western Sahara Association, Shayna Humanitarian Services, African Australian Advocacy Centre, Assyrian Heritage Foundation, Massoud Foundation Australia,



Participants discussing their lived experience in the first interactive activity.

Himyana Social Services, Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency (HARDA), Youth Congress Rohingya, Nakango Vision Inc and MARSHAL.

Program Description and Highlights

We were honoured to have Rev. Bill Crews open our training with stories from his humanitarian work around the world. Rev. Crews shared stories of resilience and hardship, encouraging participants not to lose hope even when advocacy feels overwhelming. He closed with words often shared with him: that while we cannot change the whole world, changing the life of one child changes the world for that child, and at times, that is enough. For all involved, this was a moving and motivating start to the day.

From there, the participants dove into the Convention itself moving through an interactive quiz followed by lively discussion, discovering that it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty on the planet. The session covered the distinction between ratification and incorporation, the role of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in



Participants listening to Louisa Yasukawa throughout the program

monitoring implementation, and the Optional Protocols, including the individual complaints mechanism Australia has not yet adopted. Small groups then tackled real world scenarios covering everything from climate friendly play spaces to family separation, unpacking core principles like non-discrimination and the powerful role civil society plays in shaping outcomes for children everywhere.

Closer to home, participants shared thoughtful reflections on the issues facing children in their own Australian communities and celebrated the growing momentum behind a enshrining child rights at a federal level. They also explored Australia's progress and ongoing challenges on refugee children's rights. These challenges include the landmark 2025 finding on Nauru detention.

A highlight of the day was the discussion on diaspora advocacy, with participants sharing inspiring samples from their own communities. From grassroots mental health education to storytelling projects, it was clear how much our participants have to offer in their own communities. Their insights show just how much impact community-led, collaborative advocacy can have.



Participant group photo at the conclusion of the program with their certificates of completion.