FIRST NSW ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Acting Secretary General of the ChildFund Alliance Andrew Johnson has been appointed as NSW’s first Advocate for Children and Young People, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello announced today.

Mr Johnson, who is currently based in New York, will represent the interests of all young people under the age of 25, giving them a strong voice on government policies, programs and decisions which impact on their lives. He begins his appointment on 9 January 2015.

The Advocate for Children and Young People is an independent statutory office that replaces the Commission for Children and Young People, which was established in 1999.

“I am delighted that Mr Johnson has accepted this position and I look forward to working with him to develop this State’s first whole-of-government strategy to tackle the big issues facing children and young people,” Mr Dominello said.

“A key priority for the Advocate will be the development of a three-year strategic plan which will inform the way the NSW Government engages with children and young people, supports them to reach their potential and responds to the challenges they face.

“Mr Johnson is an internationally respected campaigner for children and young people who has worked in senior roles with leading organisations including Save the Children, Plan International and ChildFund Alliance as well as the Australian Council of Social Services.

“He will oversee the critically important role of promoting the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives. I have no doubt his experience will be a great asset to the young people of NSW.

“I wish to pay special tribute to the Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People Kerryn Boland who has done a stellar job over the past 18 months, especially in conducting state-wide consultations on the future of youth advocacy in NSW.”

Mr Johnson’s appointment fulfils the NSW Government’s commitment to having a strong advocate in NSW who can stand up for the interests of children and young people.

“Throughout my career I have helped to give a voice to those unable to defend their rights, especially children. To be the Advocate for Children and Young People in NSW is an honour and I look forward to starting in this important role,” Mr Johnson said.

The creation of the Advocate for Children and Young People was a recommendation of the Strengthening advocacy for children and young people in NSW report which encapsulated the views of over 900 children and young people and more than 40 organisations.

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