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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will open for signature in New York on Australia Day. The Australian Acting Permanent Representative to the United Nations will be present at the signature ceremony to demonstrate our commitment to it. We look forward to early signature as part of our continuing efforts to promote and extend universal standards for the observation of human rights.

In accordance with the normal procedures for signing international legal instruments, we have consulted widely with interested groups and we are currently consulting States and Territories on their views.

The Convention aims to protect and promote the human rights of children throughout the world. The Convention represents a major advance in setting international standards for the welfare of a particularly vulnerable group in society. For example, the Convention sets out the principle that both parents have joint primary responsibility for bringing up their children and that the Government should support them in this task, and endorses the child's rights to protection from abuse and neglect, from harmful or hazardous work, from drug abuse and from sexual exploitation.

Australia has taken a leading role in developing the Convention in the United Nations system. We welcomed its adoption by the UN General Assembly late last year, and we hope for its early entry into force.

I would like to commend the efforts of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in working towards the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Federal Human Rights Commissioner, Brian Burdekin, acted as a special adviser to the Australian delegation and made a significant contribution to the drafting group on the Convention. The Commission has also implemented an extensive program of consultation and information in Australia about the Convention.

I also pay tribute to the late Robert Nestdale, the former National Director of UNICEF, who worked tirelessly to realise the adoption of the Convention on the rights of the Child. It is very sad that, although he lived to see it adopted unanimously by all the countries of the UN General Assembly, he died before Australia could sign it.