

Advocate says hitting kids should be criminal...

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Advocate says hitting kids should be criminal offence

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PHYSICAL punishment against kids by their parents should be treated as assault, the state's children's commissioner says.

The call is part of a wish list of 17 priorities to protect kids and has been put to the state's political parties by Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly.

"The UN states that children should not be subject to any forms of violence. This includes violence from parents/guardians, and at school," she said. "Despite overwhelming evidence (against the practice), in South Australia, parents and guardians can still physically punish children."

Ms Connolly said such punishment was currently protected as a defence under section 20(2) of the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935.

"It allows 'conduct that lies within limits of what would be

generally accepted in the community as normal incidents,' she said.

"The Act should be amended to outlaw physical punishment and override the current common law defence."

Ms Connolly would not be drawn on penalties for parents convicted for assault.

Greens leader Tammy Franks said the party policy was to rid all abuse of children, including corporal punishment.

"We absolutely support this ban," she said.

SA-Best spokeswoman Connie Bonaros said: "If we want an end to family violence, it must include tougher penalties for parents who somehow think it's OK to 'smack their kids around'."

A Liberal spokesman said the proposal would be considered but child welfare decisions "should rest with the parents or guardians".

The Labor Party has been contacted for comment.

Other major items on Ms Connolly's 17-point list include an independent appeals mechanism/body for children who have been excluded from school.

Ms Connolly also said there should be an increase in the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years.

Helen Connolly.

