THINGS THAT MATTER

Children in Australia share their views
Acknowledgements

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This report was designed by UNICEF Australia Young Ambassador HY William Chan.
Notes: Personally, this all comes from the heart
- Everyone has the right to education
- Right to a good leader eg. Governments, emperor, king, queen etc. etc.
- Children have the right to know the truth, just like adults
- Have the right not to be harmed by others
- Have the right not to be harmed or verbally abused because of your colour, shape, race, beliefs, religion, country you live in or standing up for your rights
- I don’t feel safe around all the alcoholics and people that take too much drugs
- I get reassured when famous people say things to stop this rubbish in the world
- I feel sorry for kids who get racially bullied and verbally abused because of their race, how they look, popularity, colour of skin, or if they have a disability
- Every child has the right to dreams and the right for them to come true
- Help pay more for stopping deadly viruses
- Help children in third world countries
- People should stand up for their rights
- I’m worried about idiotic people that do bad things and dangerous weapons

Karl, 12, NSW
Children have a voice and it should be loud enough to hear

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention outlines the fundamental rights that all children need and are entitled to so that they can live a full life. Governments around the world, including Australia, have signed and ratified this convention, making a promise to their children to promote and protect their rights.

To mark this special event the UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors went to find out how Australia’s children think whether their rights are being respected and fulfilled, in their own lives and words. Over two months, we heard from over 1500 children and youth across Australia, through consultations, written statements and online submissions. We heard from children in almost every state and territory, from different backgrounds and experiences, and who were between four and 18 years old.

This report is a snapshot of what children in Australia we spoke to think is important, what they are concerned about and their suggestions for how Australia could be improved so that every child has their rights fulfilled. As you flick through the pages, you will find hundreds of opinions, experiences, concerns and ideas. As we had so many statements from children and young people, we have only been able to include a small sample of all the things children shared with us - but we hope these are reflective of what many children said.

It’s not only practically important that children are heard - it is their right. Children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions seriously considered when adults are making decisions about their lives. This right is found in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is the path to all other rights being fulfilled.

Children are experts in their own lives and experiences. As we listened to children, they reminded us (the UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors) that every child’s life is different even if they are from the same family, speak the same language, live in the same street or go to the same school. If adults don’t prioritise listening to children, it will be difficult or even impossible to make decisions on behalf of children that are in their best interests and support them to thrive.

Across all our consultations, we made the following observations:

1. Children reminded us that they are complete and complex people, who, like all people, have many different things that are important to them. As 12-year-old Karl demonstrates in his statement on what’s important to him (left), children are concerned about things in their immediate lives, at home, at school and in their communities. They are also aware that they are part of a bigger world. Many have concerns about the future for all children, and have ideas for how they can contribute to making the world a fair and sustainable place for all people. We found that as children grew older, their world got bigger and they became more aware of and engaged with global issues.

2. Children are directly connected to events happening in other parts of the world. This included a large number of children who had family living in situations of persecution or conflict in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Pakistan. Uncertainty about family safety and reunification was a source of stress for many children. Many of these children also reported experiencing racism, and identified that the media played a role in perpetuating discrimination towards minority groups in Australia. This left these children feeling unsafe and sometimes had a negative impact on their sense of self-esteem.
Children are acutely aware of what is happening in the lives of children around them – which was often unknown to adults present in the consultations (such as teachers). Children were aware of children in their friendship groups, schools and communities who were experiencing abuse, neglect, violence, discrimination, bullying, poverty and mental illness, to name just a few issues. They wanted more ways to lead action to tackle these different issues, with the support of adults, instead of the other way around.

Children and young people are active citizens. Despite not always having direct mechanisms to express their opinions on decisions made by the Government, they were highly engaged on local, domestic and international issues. Many were worried that adults and decision-makers were not planning for an equitable and sustainable future. Children were worried that they would be the ones to deal with the future repercussions of delayed action on issues such as climate change, conflict, universal education and poverty.

Equality was a theme that underpinned all other themes in our consultations. The children we listened to believed that if all people were treated equally and given equal opportunity, this would address the root cause of many issues they saw in society.

This report contains a collection of statements from children, in their own words, which reflect the most frequently mentioned themes to the questions we asked.

We (the UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors) have conducted the consultations, collated the information, sorted the information into themes and curated a selection of statements which we felt best represented what children had to say on these themes. We have also authored a short summary with each theme, as a reflection of the broad scope of consultations and to guide you as you read.

At the end of each section are recommendations made by children and UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors which we hope will guide Australia’s decision-makers to address some of the key concerns children raised during the consultations.

We have one big recommendation that we would like to make: our Government needs to develop a national plan for children. 25 years after signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia still does not have a national plan to ensure all children are happy, healthy, safe and treated fairly. This it makes it difficult for us to measure how things are improving for children in our country. It also means that some children who are being harmed, ignored or treated unfairly will keep on missing out on the support they need to thrive. In building a national plan, the Government needs to make sure that all organisations concerned with children, and most importantly children themselves, have the opportunity to give genuine and meaningful input. This needs to happen soon, and it needs to happen in a proper way.

We thank every child and young person who gave us the privilege of hearing what matters to you. We were delighted, surprised, and deeply moved by the things you had to say. Thank you for trusting us with your thoughts. We hope this report does justice to the clarity and sincerity of your opinions.

We would also like to thank all the teachers, schools, parents and adults who supported children to be part of this process.

We will be taking this report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, our National Children’s Commissioner, Members of our Federal Parliament, organisations that work for children in Australia and the general public. We want children’s voices to be heard, considered and responded to because they matter.

We hope that whoever you are, wherever you are and whatever you do, that you will do your best to value and listen to children, and speak up for their rights.

Jay, Hiba, Jeffrey, Brianna, Sophie, Josh, Kate, Rahila, William & Catherine UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors, 2014-2015
Recommendations for the Australian Government

In implementing the following recommendations, the Australian Government should ensure that every child is able to access their basic rights including to health, education and protection free from any form of discrimination. The Australian Government should also work in partnership with child rights organisations, including UNICEF Australia, to develop a whole of Government model for children and young people that ensures children and young people are able to participate in the decisions that impact on their lives.

Implementation of the CRC

UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:

1.1 Implement a National Plan for Children that fully reflects the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.2 Resource a peak child advocacy body to ensure the views of children are heard by policy makers at all levels of government and at all stages of the development, design and implementation of law and policy.

1.3 Immediately sign and ratify the Third Option Protocol, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Education

UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:

2.1 Ensure quality education is accessible for all children in Australia. This should include:

   2.1.1 The provision of adequate support and resources so that no child experiences inequities in educational quality including those children living in rural or remote Australia or from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

   2.1.2 Costs involved in education do not act as a barrier for children.

2.2 Prioritise the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage when considering tertiary education reform to ensure equal access and opportunity.

Bullying

UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:

3.1 Increase efforts to stop bullying in schools. This should include an Australia wide focus on teaching methods, involvement of parents and children, monitoring of school plans and processes to investigate and address incidents of bullying.

3.2 Adequately resource anti-bullying programs, including those that empower bystanders to respond to bullying.

3.3 Improve national data collection on incidences of self-harm as well as attempted and completed suicides.

3.4 Provide improved support to, and evaluation of, suicide prevention programs for children and young people.

Health

UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:

4.1 Address gaps in support for families who have a family member living with a chronic illness. The needs of children who have parents with a chronic illness require special attention, as does supporting families who have a child with a chronic illness.

4.2 Increase funding for specialised child and youth mental health programs and services.

4.3 Provide all children with the same quality and access to health care services. This includes addressing the affordability of health care for people in Australia.

4.4 Ensure child rights are included in the training of health professionals.
Recommendations.

5 Skilled professional support for children
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
5.1 Increase the number of professional and qualified support workers in schools, who have expertise and experience in working with children and young people. These people should be resourced to provide children and young people with rapid appropriate assistance within their school communities, on matters of their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. They should also be able to provide appropriate and timely referral and support to access external services.

6 Protection
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
6.2 Increase resourcing for school programs which focus on peer education on violence, abuse and neglect, in acknowledgement of the fact that children can often be more aware of protection issues for their peers but are unsure about what to do.
6.3 Improve prevention and early intervention support for families to stay together to reduce incidences of children being removed to out of home care, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
6.4 Prioritise and support full implementation and practice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. This includes:
6.4.1 Recognition of the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make the best decisions relating to the care of their children through partnership and participation.
6.4.2 Prioritising and supporting placement of children with kin, or when not possible, then with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. Family proximity to placements should be a primary consideration.

7 Safe communities
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
7.1 Work with local councils to ensure that public spaces are child friendly spaces.
7.2 Encourage and support local councils to develop a framework for including children’s input on all decisions relating to community life and development. This framework should be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
7.3 Invest in preventative education programs to reduce violence and crime in communities.
7.4 Monitor and enforce speed limits in school zones, or other parts of the community where children congregate.

8 Poverty in Australia
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
8.1 Develop an anti-poverty strategy for children and families experiencing poverty in Australia. This must include mechanisms to ensure that children’s living standards across Australia are monitored, measured and evaluated periodically so all children live in good conditions that support their development.

9 Children experiencing homelessness
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
9.1 Develop and implement a long-term national housing strategy that prioritises the needs of children and young people.
9.2 Improve the coordination and integration of services that intervene early and prevent young people becoming homeless.
9.3 Assist mainstream services to respond quickly and appropriately to the needs of young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.
9.4 Consult children and young people to ensure that services will fulfil their rights. Children who are at risk of homelessness must be prioritised in this process.
Children and families in immigration detention
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
10.1 Immediately release all children and their families in immigration detention into the community with adequate resources.
10.2 Allow children who are refugees to stay permanently in Australia.
10.3 Ensure that refugee and asylum seeker laws are in line with international law and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child including by ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in migration and asylum matters. People making the decisions must have the appropriate skills and training in determining children’s best interests.
10.4 Ensure children are listened to when decisions are being made that affect their family and their care.
10.5 Help families who are separated reunite with their relatives who are overseas.
10.6 Provide psycho-social support to children and families who are experiencing or have experienced profound stress.

Children with disabilities
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
11.1 Increase funding for schools so that the built, learning and social environments are supportive and inclusive of children living with a disability.
11.2 Ensure children living with a disability have the opportunity to direct what support or improvements they need.

Overseas aid
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
12.1 Meet Australia’s commitment to increasing foreign aid in line with the United Nations Millennium Goals.

Climate change
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the Australian Government:
13.1 Continue to invest in renewable energy in Australia to meet our international obligations to reduce carbon emissions.

Recommendations for the National Children’s Commissioner
UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors recommend the National Children’s Commissioner:
14 Keep up the great work! (a message from the children we listened to)
15 Advocate for a National Plan for Children & encourage the children and youth sector to join this call.
16 Advocate for a national forum for children to directly engage with decision-makers on matters which affect them.
17 Continue to advocate on issues important to children, such as recommendations 1-13 in this report.
What’s important to us?

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- Article 5
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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
What’s important to us?

**Family**

**ARTICLE 5:** Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly.

**ARTICLE 10:** Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

The children in our consultations told us that family is the most important thing to them. Family provides them with the support, guidance, and resources they need to have other rights fulfilled – such as education, food, shelter and safety. Family also provides children with a sense of security through being in a loving and caring environment. The children we listened to expressed that it was important for them to give love to their families, as well as receive it. The CRC identifies a safe and supportive family environment as being critical to children having their rights fulfilled. The children we listened to confirmed this was important in their lives.

However, some children we listened to, mainly from refugee backgrounds, expressed concern about being separated from their families. They were worried about the safety and health of their families, but also experienced stress from the uncertainty about when or if they will see their families again. As a signatory to the CRC, Australia must make every effort to help children be reunited with their families if they are not in the same country (Article 10). If a child comes to Australia as a refugee or asylum seeker, they are entitled to the same rights as all other children in Australia (Article 22).

My parents are important because they care for me and give me awesome facilities and food and education, water, and health. Year 6 student, QLD

My family is very important to me. Also the way people feel and the rights of people all around the world. I always think it is very important to think before you do and I always try very hard to show empathy towards others. Making sure others are happy is also very important to me. Matilda, 11, NSW

The thing that’s important to me is my family. I have no idea what I’d do without the ones I care for. If I didn’t have a family I’d have no one to talk to about my problems or whether or not the choices I made were right. That’s why I try and take care of my family as much as I can. Emily, 13, WA

Having a loving and caring family. Family is there for you no matter what. You can have friends for a year, but maybe not after that. Year 8 student, WA

The most important thing to me is my family and their protection. Not seeing them for 11 years, and having my dad pass away, and not seeing him – the thought that the same roller coaster is happening to my mother and sister in Africa is worrying for me and my brother. The emotional pain of thinking about the protection and safety of them being far away from us and the thought of never seeing them is not what any child should think about. I hope that my family becomes safe and the only way that we think this is possible is for them to come to Australia. I live with my carers and I’m happy, but I miss my family every single day and I plead that I see them soon. Fatama, 16, NSW

My family because they look after me. Emily, 6, VIC
Education

ARTICLE 28: Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children’s human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthier countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 29: Education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

All children have the right to quality education. For the children we consulted, who were all school students, education is a very important part of their lives. Children stated that education was important because it helps them to problem solve, equips them with useful skills and knowledge, is enjoyable and provides them with the foundations for building a bright future. Children also thought education settings were important for making friends.

The children we listened to explained that education helps them to navigate their immediate world as they grow and develop, but also equips them to contribute to make the wider world a better and fairer place. Some children were concerned about children in other countries missing out on their right to education, and many high school students were worried about not being able to go to university if it became more expensive.

The CRC affirms that all children have the right to quality education (Articles 28 & 29). Education should be free, and should develop each child’s personality and talents to the fullest.

Education: to get a job, to learn to read. It’s fun. It makes everyday problems easier to solve.

Primary school student, ACT

Education because if you are educated this sets you up for a bright future. Year 6 student, QLD

I value education. Without education you have no future. You can’t interact with anyone into useful skills that can’t help or benefit others. Year 8 student, WA

Education – The fact that still so many kids around the world are being denied it is really sad. Education is the building block for most other issues that can be solved once education is universal. Year 10 student, SA

I think education is really important so that people can develop and have well-informed opinions about things. Paul, 16, TAS

I think that higher education is important. The idea of making university more expensive is not in the best interests of the nation’s people. The next big idea or breakthrough could be in the mind of someone that cannot express their ideas. Joshua, 16, TAS

Malala’s story helps highlight the issue with lack of equality in regards to education. Such an inspiration. Year 12 student, NSW

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What’s important to us?

**Friends**

**ARTICLE 15:** Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Why are friends so important? The children we heard from explained that friends played a critical role in their lives – providing support, encouragement and a sense of belonging. The qualities children listed in their friends included being good listeners, non-judgemental, providing comfort in difficult times and companions in enjoying life. Some children also mentioned that friends play an important role in maintaining good mental health.

The CRC supports what these children say and states that children have the right to meet with other children and young people (Article 15). This is critical for their development, wellbeing and happiness. Families, carers, schools, communities and governments should promote and protect this right.

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Friendship is important, because you always need to have people there for you when you can’t support yourself. *Primary school student, ACT*

My family and friends and health. To be a better person. *Year 6 student, QLD*

Socialising: I like saying whatever I want and not having anyone criticise me, making friends, hearing different opinions helps me make my own, interacting with different people, a sense of belonging (to have friends and not feel judged), it’s human nature to find friends to socialise with. It’s good for mental health to socialise. *Primary school student, ACT*

My friends and family - without them, I would never get through the tough times. They cheer me up when I feel sad, stressed or angry. *Caitlyn, 12, NSW*

Friends and family – you can talk to them about problems and they can be there to comfort you through hard times. *Year 8 student, VIC*

I want to be safe and my friends to be safe. I would also like my family to be safe from danger or living in bad places. I would like to get my education, because I know it can help me in my life and help everyone. *Merci, VIC*

The most important thing for me is my family, my friends and my education. My friends because when I’m bored, I feel happy when I’m with my friends and I’m playing. *Joshua, VIC*

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Society is really important because they’re the people who support you – they’re your friends and they know what you need.  
*Josh, 15, TAS*
Food, water and shelter

**ARTICLE 24:** Children have the right to good quality healthcare, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

**ARTICLE 27:** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Many children told us that it was important for them to have the basic things they needed to survive; such as food, water, healthcare and a place to live. These children explained that these basic necessities helped them grow, stay healthy and be safe. Children listed family as the main source for all these basic needs. They explained that without these things, it would be difficult or even impossible to survive and thrive. Some children did mention concern about housing being expensive or unaffordable for some families.

Articles 24 & 25 in the CRC explain that children have the right to a standard of living which meets their needs – this includes nutritious food, clean water, quality health care and a clean environment. If any family is struggling to provide children with these basic things, the Government should give financial support (Article 26).

“Food and drink, because water is healthy and food helps me grow.”

Lotte, 7, VIC

I think it goes back to equality. People should be able to access the same basic rights and amenities like water or food regardless of where they live, who they are and what they believe. Sorren, 16, TAS

My house is important to me because that’s where I sleep, eat and do other things. Primary school student, VIC

To be part of a protective and safe environment. And shelter and education and also knowing your rights and making sure that your rights aren’t violated. Kim, NSW

I think it’s important for young people to have opportunities. It’s up to the individual whether they take them or not, but it’s really important to be given the opportunity. Alicia, High school student, TAS

Something that’s important to me is that everyone has a safe place to go to at the end of the day – even if they’ve had a rough day, they have somewhere to go and feel like they belong. Kayley, 14, TAS

Family because we love them, money because we need it to live. Houses that don’t cost too much money that are quite nice. Cheaper utilities. A.S.D., 11, NT

What’s important to us?
ARTICLE 31: Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.

No matter their age, gender, background or location – play and recreation was listed as important to children in every consultation we conducted. Imaginative play was listed more frequently among younger children, whereas older children listed more structured kinds of recreation such as playing sport, music, and games using different kinds of technology.

There were many benefits of time to play and relax, either quietly or with others. Play and recreation was almost always linked to building friendships and socialising, and was a source of happiness, relaxation, good mental health, fun and laughter for children. Sport was also listed as very important for keeping healthy.

The CRC states that all children have the right to play and to rest (Article 31). Families, schools and communities need to make sure that children have enough time to do these things so that they can develop healthily and be their best.

Sport because it keeps you active and is a fun way to keep healthy. Egan, 10, ACT

Field hockey because whenever I have had a bad day it lightens up my mood and my friends because they can always make me feel good. Amelia, 10, ACT

Friends and soccer. The time to relax and play what I want. High school student, WA

Technology to play games, my parents, my friends, more sport to keep me happy and healthy. Year 6 student, QLD

Having lots of fun – people smiling when people are having fun. It makes me feel really happy. Year 6 student, SA

Singing is an important thing to me – because I really like this and playing music. I like making songs and playing the guitar. Grace, High school student, VIC

My family, my culture and my soccer. I really like soccer! When I’m playing soccer, I’m really happy. Talib, High school student, VIC

The internet and safety because I think the internet is fun and I want to be safe. Blaze, 10, NSW

Something that is important to me is sport. Not only does it keep my body fit and ready to go, it improves my reactions which can be useful in a number of situations. Not only that, but it is something that me and my friends enjoy also being one of the main reasons that we are friends in the first place. Yud, 12, ACT

Horseriding because it makes me feel special when I do jumps and bareback. Bella, 11, ACT

My gaming consoles are important to me because without them I would have no YouTube career. Ethan, 18, WA

My health because I love sport even if I am a little behind. Will, 10, NSW

Music because it just makes you feel better sometimes. High school student, WA
Equality

ARTICLE 2: The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, and whatever type of family they come from.

Equality, ‘not being judged’ and non-discrimination were words and themes which were raised in response to many of our consultation questions. In particular, the children we heard from emphasised that if people were not treated equally, it could lead to many other problems on individual, community and global levels.

Children did not want to be dismissed because of their age, treated differently because of their gender, experience or witness racism, or be excluded because of their individual abilities. They also did not want this to be the case for anyone else around them. They acknowledged that we live in a society with people of different backgrounds, experiences and beliefs, but stressed that we all need to treat each other with respect. Everyone likes to be respected, given equal opportunity and be treated fairly. The children we heard from were concerned that if this did not happen, inequality and discrimination would have serious repercussions for the whole of society.

Article 2 of the CRC affirms that no child should experience discrimination based on their race, religion, ability, beliefs or background.

Something important to me is not being discriminated against for gender, especially when people (particularly children) are forced into stereotypes that society thinks they should conform to. This is done through the media, marketing and most importantly, attitude. It is forbidding people from being who they want to be without being judgemental or made fun of, and it is wrong. Lily, 15, TAS

My family, friends, health and welfare, the safety of myself and others, social, political and economic justice, equal rights for all people, and environmental protection. These things are important because I want to live in a world where all people feel safe and loved, and on a planet that is being cared for. I know this isn’t a reality, but I would love to be able to help change that. Vivi, 12, QLD

Gender equality – women don’t get paid as much in sports. They have to work the same amount and they do work just as hard, but they don’t always get paid the same amount which can be unfair. Year 8 student, WA

Something important to me is for everyone to have equal access to health care so that everyone is looked after no matter their social or economic backgrounds. Ben, High school student, TAS

That everyone is included. It’s important because it’s not fun being left out. Girl, 12, NSW

Non-discrimination – people aren’t be discriminated against based on religion, race, and gender. Your skin is white, my skin is brown, and it doesn’t matter. We’re all human beings and we can all relate to each other’s stories and ideas, so why not live in peace instead of discriminating against someone. You never know what your discrimination can cause. Year 8 student, WA

What’s important to us?
# Feeling safe in our community.

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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
REASONS FOR FEELING SAFE

Safe community

Children mainly felt safe due to the familiarity and trust in most of the people around them. They highlighted the importance of community trust, and how it creates a sense of collective security to know that there are people who care and want to assist in any way possible.

I think I do feel safe in my community. Although you could say that every community is unsafe in its own way. But I guess it comes down to the individual. It depends on who they associate with and what they want to do and who they want to associate with. So if you’re the type of person who does the wrong thing and hangs out with the wrong people then obviously you’re not going to feel safe, and you’ll make the community unsafe. And if you’re the type that does good, then you create a better community. Fita, Year 11, NSW

I feel completely safe. Ben, 12, WA

I feel safe in most places in my community. I feel more safe because I live in Australia and it is a peaceful country. Rosie, 12, NSW

I feel safer in my community. At school I feel safe because I have people around me who I trust and you know... I’ve got teachers who I trust and I look up to and who supervise me. I just feel safe. Year 10 student, NSW

I feel safe in my community but would feel more safe if everyone knew each other so everybody can protect each other. Year 6 student, QLD

Yes I feel safe and I would feel more safe if the government did not keep children in detention centres. Year 6 student, QLD

I think our community is pretty safe in terms of we’re a multicultural community. Just looking around, everyone’s of different backgrounds and because of that it’s a bit safer. High school student, NSW

I think I do feel safe, however I don’t think the media portrays our area in a way that makes... It makes us feel more cautious because of what’s being said to other communities and how we’re perceived. And sometimes I don’t feel safe at work because there’s an issue at work – this one girl is getting stalked when she goes home from work and stuff. Kim, Year 11, NSW

I think it does feel safe to me because I know most of the people that live around me. Tyeesha, 10, NSW

Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure.

Jasmine, 11, VIC
REASONS FOR FEELING SAFE

Family

Children across Australia told us that family and friends were some of the most important things to them. This was particularly strong in the responses of younger children, who felt safe knowing that their parents loved them and wanted to protect them. Family was important to children not only for love and protection, but also for guidance. Children believed that parents only wanted the best for them but were also aware that this wasn’t the case for all children. Some children, however, were concerned about safety in the family home. For example, being ready for emergencies such as a bushfire.

Article 18 of the CRC states that parents should have primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of children. Parents should, first and foremost, be concerned with the best interests of the child (in the form of their child’s physical and mental wellbeing), access to food and shelter and education.

I feel safe around my mum and my sisters. Primary school student, VIC

I feel safe because my parents love me and wouldn’t let anything bad happen. I think more parents need to be like that. Year 6 student, QLD

I feel safe at home because I know where the fire extinguishers are, but I don’t feel safe in my holiday house because I don’t know where the fire extinguishers are and it’s not properly enclosed. Primary school student, VIC

I feel safe around family and friends, but sometimes I don’t feel safe in unfamiliar situations. Angus, 1, TAS

Your dad could protect you. Kindergarten student, VIC

I do feel safer at home of course because of the comfort of my family, and we all treat each other well with respect. At school I do feel safe because there are people who supervise us. High school student, NSW

I feel safe. My parents are there and my aunty lives near me so I can go see her. Maybe if someone isn’t feeling safe they could ask for the police to walk around to see if anything is happening. Year 6 student, SA

My family is important so that I can feel safe.

Sophia, 11, NSW
Feeling safe in our community.

REASONS FOR FEELING UNSAFE

Violence

 ARTICLE 19: Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

One of the main reasons children felt unsafe was due to violence in their communities. This included domestic violence, acts of violence carried out by children or young people on their peers and violence using weapons and sexual assault. While girls listed more concerns about violence, boys reported more experiences of violence during our consultations. The children we listened to were often aware of friends or peers who were experiencing ongoing violence at home, and even if they were not directly affected by violence, it deeply concerned them.

Children and young people who were newly-arrived refugees were among those who reported feeling most safe. Compared to their experiences of living in conflict zones, being under threat of persecution, Australia was a safe place. Some children also reported experiencing physical violence in school at the hands of other students. One boy even mentioned that he would go through a new uniform every week because his clothes would be so ripped by other children. This kind of violence was often accompanied by verbal or emotional abuse.

Children have the right to be safe at home, school and in the community and must be protected from all forms of violence and abuse (Articles 3 & 19).

I feel sort of unsafe in my area, most times. I think there should be more police to get gangs off the street. It’s pretty hard out there. Like when you are trying to walk home and you have seven boys rock up to you try [and] taking your stuff. Coming from Carramar is pretty hard. I’ve been jumped for no reason, plenty of times. You walk and you see some guy saying “do you have smoke man… do you have smoke” and I don’t have a smoke. He’s like “what – you don’t have a smoke?” Then he wants to bash me. And I’m like, how can I give you something that I don’t have? Year 11 student, NSW

I do feel safe, however when you watch the news and all the disasters that are happening around you, you get a bit scared sometimes. So you’ve just got to be careful and be cautious with people you might come in contact with – you don’t know who they really are. Angelina, year 11 student, NSW

I don’t feel safe when I’m walking around Melbourne because on the news you hear about heaps of robbers and bomb threats and I just don’t feel safe. Primary school student, VIC

Hearing things happening around the world- it’s scary to think that that could happen to you, but at this moment, I feel safe in my community and family. Primary school student, ACT

Yes I feel safe, especially in Australia and in Shepparton. In the past when I was in Pakistan, it was not safe for me. Every day there was bombing. Now I feel safe because there are no bombs blasting. High school student, VIC

Here in Shepparton, it is safer than in Africa, because in Africa I was living a really hard life. When I was sleeping inside the house, I was sleeping but I was very scared. I didn’t know what was going to happen one day to the next. Back in Africa, it was very hard to get food, education, healthcare – everything. I would like to thank the Government for what they did for us to bring us here to Australia. They are very good for us. Now in Shepparton, I sleep well, I go to school, I’ve got many kinds of food which I like to eat and I’m enjoying my life. Melsi, VIC

Recently on the news, there’s been this thing where some kid got king-hit. Year 7 student, VIC
There’s been a lot of crime going around in Sundry. Getting all the idiots off the street in Sundry would make me feel more safe. Only this morning there was a drug bust. High school student, VIC

At home, compared to Shepparton in the middle of nowhere, we’ve grown up there and that’s what we’re used to. I feel perfectly safe at home. In Shepparton though, there’s nothing that’s threatening but it’s a bigger town with more people and personalities. There’s obviously going to be more problems but that happens in any town. Year 8 student, VIC

No, not really. Because someone got kidnapped near my home. Gemma, 11, NSW

No, because anyone could break in easily in my house that’s why we need more security. Sione, 11 NSW

Yes and no, there are a lot of people in my community who smoke, drink alcohol a lot and just aren’t very friendly. Walking through the mall is sometimes scary. Year 8 student, VIC

Crime

Children around Australia told us that one of the biggest barriers to feeling safe in local communities was crime. They were concerned not only about the way that their environment looked, but also how it felt. Children wanted things that brought communities together in positive ways such as public parks - which some children felt were currently in disrepair and unsafe. In some communities, where children felt there was more crime and violence, they believed that there was no sense of belonging in the community. Children described crime as including break-ins, dangerous driving, drug and alcohol abuse, theft, kidnapping and stalking. Most children had not been targets or victims of crime, but many had seen crime reported in the media and had been warned about crime by their parents. Children highlighted the need and importance for both physical and emotional security.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations to Australia (2012) state that the best way to deal with crime in families and communities is through preventative education. This involves educating the children, the parents and the community about the dangers of crime, and how to stay safe, in addition to working with the Government.
Feeling safe in our community.

REASONS FOR FEELING UNSAFE

News and media

ARTICLE 17: Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.

Children told us that some events reported by the media negatively affected them. While most children reported feeling safe in their local communities, world events, and the way in which the media reported these events, made them feel less safe. Children talked about their own safety in relation to how events were portrayed in the media, such as terrorism, the spread of Ebola and local crime or violence. Children spoke about the fact that they changed their behaviour in response to their perception of these threats. For example, many felt more wary of strangers after media reports on local and global incidents. Children were often scared by what they heard on the news, but were not sure who to believe.

Children had very clear concerns in regards to stereotyping. The children shared their own experiences of being stereotyped and how it made them feel; stressing that no one should ever be mistreated for being who they are. Children explained that while everyone should be treated equally in every way, assumptions perpetuated in society and reflected in the media can undermine this. These children recommended that we should not assume, but attempt to understand and accept other people for who they are, not who we wish them to be.

“I wish the media didn’t sensationalise the South-Western area in such a negative light.”

Kim, Year 11 student, NSW

My mum was saying on the news that they wanted to ban the burqas in Australia. I don’t think that’s fair because that’s their own thing, if they wanted to wear it then it’s their choice. Everyone has been thinking that all the Muslims are terrorists when they’re not - they just assume it. Year 8 student, WA

Because I come from a Middle-Eastern background and I have a beard and I look Middle-Eastern, I get judged when people look at me. People see me and think “he could be a terrorist” and people get judged by that. I think this is something that’s really bad in this society because usually all the terrorists who do stuff are Muslim and have beards and are from the Middle East. So yeah, I get judged for that. The media just exaggerates things and - you know - the people who live in this society just believe what it says. For me, eventually, I get used to it and I know how to react to it after a while. But some people can’t accept the fact that they get called terrorists and that bothers them a lot, I think. Year 12 student, VIC

“I don’t feel safe when I’m walking around Melbourne because on the news you hear about heaps of robbers and bomb threats and I just don’t feel safe.”

Primary school student, VIC
The children we consulted were very concerned about bullying. They talked about the many forms bullying could take and how it made children feel unsafe. The children described situations from their own lives where they had experienced bullying in some form – verbally, physically, online or indirectly through being excluded. The children recognised however, that although bullying is one of the biggest issues in schools, it was also one of the hardest to stop. Children suggested that for bullying to stop, we all need to recognise that we are all human and that we all deserve the same kind of respect regardless of any factor.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations to Australia (2012) suggests that investigating and addressing bullying issues within schools is the best way to stop bullying. This, the report indicates, should be done with the full involvement of children, their parents and the community.

Article 2 of the CRC also recognises every child’s right to non-discrimination on any basis. The CRC also recognises every child’s right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.
Feeling safe in our community.

Suggestions for improving safety

Whilst the overwhelming evidence from children in our consultations showed that families and strong relationships in the community were the things that made children feel most safe, they did list some other suggestions for improving safety. This included tackling crime through having more police patrolling, improved security such as good home security and security cameras, and less drug and alcohol use in public places. A large number of children mentioned unsafe roads as a big concern: from dangerous driving on their streets, fast cars in school pick-up zones, or feeling unsafe around the behaviour of other drivers on the roads when they were learning how to drive.

| I think that while the problem can be fixed by adding more streetlights, people shouldn’t ever feel unsafe no matter how bad or good visibility is. | Jo, 16, TAS |
| I would feel safer if there was less rubbish on the ground because I could trip over and hurt myself badly and who knows what’s going to happen in the future: the world could be like a whole rubbish patch and who knows what will happen to our human revolution? | Primary school student, VIC |
| Less things hidden - imagination makes things much worse, adults being more open. | Primary school student, ACT |
| I feel safe in my community as there are really good policemen there who protect us. | Year 6 student, SA |
| I generally feel safe, but I am aware that there are people out there that don’t feel safe. I think we can solve that by bringing up equality, so that they feel safer with where they are. | Meg, 16, TAS |
| I would feel safer if there was no global warming because global warming is sort of a bit of a scary thing. | Primary school student, VIC |
| In bad countries where people are shot, tell the army to go there and take injured people to hospital. | Primary school student, ACT |
| Put a fence around the school. | Primary school student, ACT |
# Things that make us worried.

## 1. FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- 121 responses
- Article 10

## 2. THE FUTURE
- 85 responses
- Article 38

## 3. WAR
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## 4. CRIME AND VIOLENCE
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## 5. COMMUNITY SAFETY
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## 6. STRESS AND BULLYING
- 50 & 45 responses
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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Things that make us worried.

Something happening to family and friends

ARTICLE 10: Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

Children told us that they worried most about something bad happening to their family or friends. Family and friends provided these children with a sense of positive self-esteem as well as a secure platform to develop and flourish. Family and friends were seen as irreplaceable and a source of emotional support, comfort, protection, safety and security. Many children expressed concern about losing their loved ones.

A number of children we heard from were concerned about their families overseas who were affected by conflict - especially in regions like Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Syria. They were worried about being separated from families in other countries, especially if there was no certainty of being reunited. Separation due to health or divorce also made many children anxious.

The CRC emphasises the importance of family. Children should not be separated from their families unless they are at risk of harm (Articles 9 & 19). Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family (Article 10). The Government should make every effort to support children to be with their families.

I feel worried because other people are in Africa – my family and my friends. Because there is no peace there, they don’t have enough food and don’t have a house and don’t sleep well. There are too many enemies there. I’m worried about my mum because I don’t know if she’s still alive. I know in my life, if I don’t know where my mum is, my future is not good. I hope the government can help me to find her. I can’t have any peace because of my mum. Natalia, High School student, VIC

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Losing my mum. Chris, 10, WA

There are too many families where parents do not stay together and divorce. Lachie, 10, WA

What worries me the most is my family. They are all in Africa and since this Ebola started, I don’t want any of them catching it, but we’re not really sure what’s happening at the moment. Every single day I get to talk to them, ask them the first question: has anyone on the compound got the Ebola sickness? And when they say no, I’m happy. And then they say: the next compound has got it. So every day I have the worry that my family – my mum or my sister – will get it. I feel protective about them but I can’t do anything because I’m here. Fatima, 16, NSW

My friends – people my age, because I know a lot of my friends have been battling with depression. It’s worrying because adults and teachers and parents don’t have a full understanding of what it is, and they see it as their child being sad, but it is actually a mental illness. People can’t see that something is wrong and something needs to be done about it. Year 10 student, SA
Things that make us worried.

The future

Children consulted by UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors were uncertain about the future. Despite having a lot of optimism, practical ideas for improving equality, and hope for the future, many of the children we listened to were concerned about global issues such as war, politics and climate change. In their immediate lives, many children mentioned they were anxious about their school marks as it played a major role in their future opportunities.

Young people in high school were particularly concerned about getting into university. Many young people in regional, rural and more disadvantaged areas as well as young people from minority backgrounds were worried that even if they achieved the marks to get into university, they would have to forgo higher education because of concerns that it may become unaffordable in the near future. Children told us, considering social or economic disadvantage, that they believe obtaining a tertiary education should be an opportunity which is based on merit not money. A common worry was finding a stable job and income and many children were unsure of what they would do after finishing school.

Although children may have many years of schooling before they reach university or enter the workforce, the consultations showed how children attempt to understand their role in the community from a very young age and try to work out how they can contribute to their community in our future. Children aspire to fulfil their dreams and want to reach their full potential. The Government has a responsibility to ensure equal opportunity for education, employment and development of children.

Your future in many ways – maybe your career path, maybe your family.

Asalah, Year 12 student, NSW

The future. A lot. I would think that even when you always try to think in a positive way, there is something that makes you think in a negative way. Your future in many ways – maybe your career path, maybe your family. Asalah, Year 12 student, NSW

Something that worries me on a personal scale is that I don’t have my future planned out. I try so hard to get grades but I don’t have planned out what I want to do with those grades. Something that worries me globally is that there’s going to be a day when there is no more humans left and nothing to remember them by. Kayley, 14, TAS

I’m worried about my bridging visa. There’s only 2-3 months left before it finishes. I’m really worried about this because I support my family in Pakistan. I live here by myself and I’m staying with my cousin. I’m really really worried. I lived in detention for 3 months in Tasmania. I came by boat. I’m now 17 years old. Detention is not good – but it’s better than Afghanistan. A friend of mine died in detention – he was 40 years old. I’m not feeling good. But I know Australia gives lots of help for asylum seeker people. High school student, VIC

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Teenagers have been described as still growing children, but sometimes adult responsibilities are expected of them. In a society that’s really focused on self-image, I think it’s really hard for teens to feel safe and grow up. In the future I worry about the next generation – will they have to go through a worse situation than us? Year 12 student, VIC

The future – if the current generation screws up, we’re going to have to clean up their messes. It’s worrying. Year 10 student, SA
Things that make us worried.

**War**

**ARTICLE 38:** Governments should not allow children under 15 to join the army. Children in war zones should receive special protection.

Children told us that war was something they worry about. Most children were exposed to war through the media, but some children had also lived through war or persecution. Some children had family who were still living in conflict zones.

War caused many of the children we consulted to feel stressed and anxious. In particular, many children said that they were troubled by the killing of innocent people around the world. They worried that violence would increase and could not understand the reasons for war or what was really happening. Children were very aware of the devastating effects of war, such as the displacement of people.

Many of the children we listened to expressed dissatisfaction with the way Australia currently treats asylum seekers. Some people are not safe in their own country, come to Australia looking for help and hope to be allowed to stay.

The CRC clearly states that children who come into the country as refugees should have the same rights as children born in that country. If children and families have run away from danger in their home country, our decision-makers should make sure they are able to live in the community and have a home as quickly as possible.

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“**There’s enough money for war, but not for the poor.**

*Ayman, NSW*

I worry that some soldiers can’t deal with the things they see. It’s a big problem with people after war and it’s affecting them and their whole lives – they can’t get rid of it and it’s really sad. *Josh, 15, TAS*

I have two worries in my life. I worry because of my family in Iraq, my uncle, my grandpa and my aunties – because in Iraq it’s not safe for them, it’s so dangerous. And I am worried for my future, what will happen for me in the future. I have many things to do and I feel scared. *Bashir, High school student, VIC*

It’s the fact that all these people who are seeking asylum are human beings; we should all be treated equally rather than being pushed back into a country where there is war and where we don’t feel safe. We should instead be given a place to stay as our basic human right. *Joel, 15, TAS*

I think that if we don’t let the asylum seekers in and share our resources with them they are still going to be having these problems, and we are going to be seen as the country that pushed them out and neglected them. If there was a baby in a house, and you knew it was being abused, you wouldn’t just leave it there. We know that there are people out there that have been abused in their country; we need to do something about it. *Meg, 16, TAS*

Nuclear bombs and nuclear bombs from space. *Year 6 student, ACT*

I’m scared of terrorists and wars in other countries because it could easily come to Australia. *Year 8 student, WA*
**Crime and violence**

Some children we heard from were concerned about crime and/or violence. Children mentioned feeling threatened by criminals who might cause harm to themselves or their loved ones and by seeing people with weapons such as knives or guns. They were specifically worried about being robbed, attacked, hurt by bullies, harassed, family violence and kidnapping. Many children stated they had read or heard about such stories in the media and feared it might happen to them, while a few children had a family member who was a victim of crime.

Children have the right to be safe at home, school and in the community (Articles 3 & 19).

The amount of break-ins and robberies that happen. When you’re at home, you’re afraid that someone might break in and you might not have anything to protect yourself with. **Year 8 student, VIC**

Someone breaking into my house, and/or taking me. **Year 6 student, WA**

The thing that worries me is if someone robs my family or my house gets robbed. **Year 5 student, VIC**

I’m scared of paedophiles as well because one lives up the street. The police found out and now he’s in jail. There were cameras outside and we thought it was a high-security house, but he turned out to be a paedophile. **High school student, WA**


That someone would mug me on my way home from school. **Year 6 student, NSW**

Remembering to lock the doors. **Year 2 student, SA**

What worries me is, how easy it is for people to get away with crimes. I just think that it’s unfair that people can commit the same crime, but get different sentence times. I just think to stop all riots and all these kind of things happening – all punishments should just be the same. I don’t believe that just because someone does a crime they shouldn’t have the same punishment as someone else because they have a valid reason. To a lot of people that might not be a valid reason. **High school student, WA**

If someone’s trying to hurt you that makes you feel worried. **Kindergarten student, VIC**

I get worried when I see people with guns or knives. **Bella, 11, ACT**

Kidnapping, getting abused, diseases in Third World countries, murder, war. **Jessica M, 11, NSW**
Things that make us worried.

Community safety

In addition to being concerned about crime and violence, there were a number of children who said that they were afraid of strangers in the community, or being alone in public spaces. Children had often been told by adults to avoid people they do not know for safety reasons and as a result many children stated they were anxious about strangers. Children said they were intimidated by older men, drug and alcohol abuse, criminals, and people on the streets during the night, as well as any person staring at them. While it is important for children to develop ways to keep themselves safe and identify risks to their safety, communities should be places where they feel safe.

While recognising that children can be vulnerable and become frightened, it is also important for children to feel that they can talk to someone they trust when they feel unsafe. It might be their mum, dad, carer, family member or friend. It might be the police, a counsellor, teacher, doctor, nurse, community worker or other people that know a lot about them and other children.

I’m just worried about the safety of my community...

*High school student, NSW*

I’m just worried about the safety of my community and visiting other communities. Couple of weeks ago my uncle got attacked by a group of people. So I’m worried about him and also worried about our family and whole of our community and their community as well. *High school student, NSW*

I get worried when I hear stories on the news about people and dog murderers because I sometime think they might get my pets or climb into my bedroom window and take me or my family. *Em, 10, WA*

Car crashes. I don’t like my family driving because of all the drunk people in Australia. *Melvin, 12, TAS*

The things that worry me are bad people, like if I go for a walk by myself that someone might take me. *Keeley, 12, TAS*

I get scared when I see people who are older than me walking around in a big gang and they seem all kind of tough. *Year 7 student, VIC*

I would say – probably harassment. People out in the street harassing you and stuff like that. *High school student, VIC*

At night on the street thinking that there could be anyone around the next corner. *Primary school student, VIC*

The things that worry me about my local community are the people who are on the streets and what they do, but other than that I feel safe in my local community. *Michelle, 12, VIC*

When people are drunk and they just go crazy. *Year 2 student, SA*

The thing that worries me is that there are too many cars coming in and out, so when I am playing there I am scared that a car will come. *Jacob, 9, QLD*

When I am alone in the street or in the dark because I think people will hurt me. *Tyeesha, 10, NSW*
Stress and bullying

**ARTICLE 6**: Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

**ARTICLE 29**: Education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

Some children were worried about being bullied and others mentioned stress at school. Bullying is different than fighting or teasing. It is repetitive and involves negative actions by one person or a group of people against chosen targets. There are 3 groups of children involved: bullies, people experiencing bullying, and bystanders. The children we listened to were concerned about being physically harmed, being socially isolated and hearing put-downs from bullies. They said that sometimes this behaviour came from their own friends. A lot of children mentioned that they were worried about being judged by others, including their peers. Bullying can make children feel uncomfortable and instil a negative sense of self-esteem. Many children we spoke with were aware of the harmful effects of bullying and noticed how it can lead to depression and self-harm.

School was also a source of stress. Many children we heard from said they were worried about performing well in tests and exams and that they had too many assessments. Many felt pressure from parents, teachers and themselves to meet high expectations. This was a common worry amongst many students because they felt it was a major factor that will determine their future career opportunities.

I worry about the people who get judged every day and tormented and who have a lot of aggressiveness in their lives. Bell, 15, TAS

My friends are mean sometimes. Izzy, 12, NSW

Put downs and statements that make others uncomfortable. Primary school student, ACT

At the moment what’s really been worrying me is bullying and its rise. Last year one of my friends from my old school committed suicide. He was only in year 9 and because of this insistent bulling he had been having suicidal thoughts. So it’s really hard. You want be able to go to a place no matter what, be safe and be who you are, and not be stereotyped because of who are you are, what you like and what your interest are! I think schools really do need to kind of push out more. Year 11 student, NSW

If I fall behind in class. I don’t want to fail. It’s not my teacher or family it’s just me. Year 6 student, QLD

Bullying worries me all the time because I am an easy target. Gemma C, 11, NSW

I think we should support the children and people who self-harm. From personal experience, I once self-harmed. I was under a lot of stress, but once I opened up to a few people I was able to stop the addiction and habits. I still get thoughts, but we just need to support the people who are under stress but don’t tell people. Year 10 student, VIC

The thing that I am most worried about is bullying. Beth, 14, TAS

Things that make us worried.
Things that make us worried.

Other worries

Like most people, children have many worries. These varied from worries in their immediate lives in the present, to worries about the world and the future. Many children think a lot, and think deeply about the things they experience, see, hear and learn about in their lives and the world. In addition to the main themes mentioned already, the worries we heard about linked to: failure, natural disaster, climate change, unsafe roads, disease and sickness, body image, unemployment, drugs and alcohol, death, meaning and purpose in life, the government, disrespectful children and time running out. While these themes and concerns were very diverse, this question reminded us of the importance of having safe spaces and time where children can discuss what they’re concerned about, as they try to make sense of the world and their place in it. Being listened to can sometimes be the best first step to finding comfort and solutions to the things we worry about (Article 12 & 13).

Kids who don’t have parents working and not bringing in an income.

Shania, Year 8, VIC

What worries me is that I think that we are all becoming slightly numb. We will turn the TV on and we’ll watch big brother or something, and then we will change to the news and there will be a war happening - kids dying and people starving - and our emotions don’t really change, I’ve noticed that I’m starting to become quite numb to all the news that’s happening and it worries me that I might get to a stage where I just don’t care and I should care. It’s something that’s worth caring about. Purnima, 16, TAS

What worries me is that life’s sort of a game of death and life and what worries me is the part of death. Like me dying, my parents dying. Primary school student, VIC

I’m actually worried about how the kids younger than us are going to turn out now when they are older. Because lately they just seem to be all worried about different technology and a lot of kids these days have become very disrespectful of others around them because they don’t seem to care about anything else. High school student, NSW

One thing that worries me about money is how it is spread around. How do you get some people are millionaire, have so much money and spend that money on things that they don’t need. The other side is people that can’t afford to survive and are struggling. Meg, 15, TAS

I get a bit worried sometimes about the lack of awareness that people have about the world, and people, races and religion. And what’s actually here in Australia, like the native plants and animals. People don’t know much about it. Year 8 student, VIC
Are we included in decisions?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
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<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>MORE AT HOME</th>
<th>MORE AT SCHOOL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Children had many recommendations of their own about how participation in decision-making across all areas of their lives could be improved. They also had some suggestions about how children could be more included in making decisions at a national level, and were eager to have more opportunities to share ideas, make decisions, take responsibility and lead change to improve their lives and the lives of others.

Of children who felt they were always included, or sometimes included, in making decisions about their lives at home and at school, 64% said they felt more included at home. Only 36% said they felt more included at school.

Children should have a voice and it should be loud enough to hear.

*Lexie, 12, NSW*

*UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD*
Are we included in decisions?

Included in decisions

Most children we listened to felt that they were included in decisions that affect their lives. Children valued being included in decision-making because they have their own ideas about big issues facing themselves and the world around them. Children also have an acute awareness that, as the next generation, they are the ones who will have to deal with the consequences of decisions made now. Children talked about equality as key to feeling included in decisions, describing inclusion as when there are equal opportunities for people of all ages to have a say in decisions. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the CRC, set out in Article 12. It is also a pathway to all of our other rights such as health, education, safety and freedom of expression.

Yes. Most things discussed at home and with my family include my little brother and I, and when big decisions are made in my household I almost always have a say. In school, the same goes. We often complete surveys at school regarding different aspects of our school life, so they can see if anything needs to change. Vivi, 12, QLD

I do feel included in decisions. At home I am the older sibling who always has a say, at school I am a prefect and I am very reasonable, so when a big decision is made, by family or friends, I am always included. Sophie, 11, NSW

Yes – I think we do have a great input, because in our school community we have a suggestion box. So people can put suggestions in and everyone can work together in making improvements in the school. So I think in that way we all can make input. Year 11 student, NSW

I always feel included at home, everyone gets an equal say and then we make decisions. Year 6 student, QLD

Excluded in decisions

Other children we listened to never felt included in decisions that affect their lives. The overwhelming reason for this was adults dismissing the views of children because of their age. Some children told us that issues were not explained in simple enough terms for them to feel confident in voicing their thoughts. Some children, such as children with disabilities, felt excluded from decision-making because people did not understand their experiences. Many children described to us feelings of sadness, frustration and stress as a result of exclusion. Participation is crucial to realising all other rights, and a lack of opportunity to participate may be in violation of the CRC. What is important to adults may not be the same to children, so decisions made without consulting children may not be made in their best interest.

I think that adults make too many decisions, as kids look at problems differently, and may have a better answer to problems that are troubling the world. Freya, 10, NSW

Not really. Sometimes I can’t understand what my parents are saying. I think they are aliens. Yug Woo, 4, ACT

In some decisions I’m included like with my family, and in school and all that, but mainly not because I’m seen as insignificant, but because I’m a kid. Year 6 student, ACT

Home, no. My parents have split up and my dad wants me to live with my mum and I don’t want to do that, and he doesn’t care. He does, but not really. High school student, WA

There are some things that bring out a lot of anxieties, for example with a class likes ours. We have a lot of really nervous and quiet kids and some teachers just didn’t care. You had to fulfil these criteria, this is the activity for today, and you have to do this, no matter how uncomfortable you were. High school student, SA

52% of respondents felt included in decisions about their lives made at home and at school.

15% felt they were not included in decisions about their lives made at home and at school.
Sometimes included in decisions

Many children told us that they only sometimes felt included in decisions that affect their lives. Some children believed decisions made on their behalf by adults were probably in their best interests. However, other children were disappointed that whether or not they are included seems dependent on the situation (such as how large the group is and how old everyone else is). Though inclusion depends on equal opportunities to have a say, some children believed only children in certain positions (such as the eldest child or Student Representative Council representatives) are invited to take part decision-making processes.

While decisions do not always have to follow the views of children directly, all children affected should be heard in the decision-making process. Children are experts in what life is like for a child. The CRC states that children have not only a right to be heard, but to have their views considered in accordance with their age and maturity. Because all children are capable of recognising what is important to them, all children have worthwhile ideas to contribute to decision-making processes.
Are we included in decisions?

More at home

Some children told UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors that they felt included in decision-making processes more at home than at school. Whereas families are small, some children find it difficult to make their opinions heard in a large school community where there are lots of people. Some children, such as children with disabilities, expressed that their differences from other children made them feel too excluded from the school community to take part in decision-making.

More at school

Some children told us that they felt included in decision-making processes more at school than at home. Many younger children felt that only their older siblings were included in decision-making at home, school provided an alternate environment to make their voices heard. In particular, friends were described as an important group where children could make their opinions heard.

I feel included in decisions with my family and at home but sometimes at school, some kids neglect me a little bit and I don’t really feel like I am part of the school community. Em, 10, WA

I get to make decisions in my family because they listen and care about my opinion. At school, it’s not so much. There’s so many people and it’s harder to get heard. High school student, WA

Yes at school and home but not with family because they don’t let me be included because it gets too complicated for me and I make wrong decisions when I am included. Ilaisaane, 11, NSW

I feel included at school because there is lot of friends that wants to listen to my opinions and stuff. But at home I think I would feel less included because some of the bigger decisions such as moving houses I would probably not get a say because I’m like the youngest. High school student, NSW

Sometimes I do, especially if it’s at school and I’m in a small group, but not at home because I’m the youngest. Year 6 student, SA
**Government and communities**

We did not ask children about whether or not they felt included in Government decision-making, but many children wanted to talk about this. When children spoke to us about the Government, they usually expressed feelings of exclusion from its decision-making processes. Many children felt that the Government was too ‘big’ for them to have any influence over. Some children said that they simply did not understand what the Government does and how it makes its decisions. Children believed that the Government should do more to support children being engaged in decision-making and to make sure that information was presented in a way they could understand.

I feel excluded when only adults get to pick who is the Government, and don’t get to know about what they do and how they do it. Luke, 12, VIC

In countries where child marriages and illegal things happen, they don’t ask you they just do it for their own benefit. I feel that everyone should have a right to speak out. Bavica, 15, TAS

I find that if I want to have a say in Government or what happens nationally I would have to say something big or really have to make a movement to be seen. Meg, 16, TAS

Not always, a lot of things like Government I don’t really have any control over and I don’t understand it. Zoe, 16, TAS

Children can express very clearly what adults and decision-makers need to see and do in order to make decisions in the best interests of the child.

*Catherine Yen, UNICEF Australia Young Ambassador*
Recommendations from children

Children had many recommendations of their own about how participation in decision-making, across all areas of their lives, could be improved. They also had some suggestions about how children could be more included in making decisions at a national level, and were eager to have more opportunities to share ideas, make decisions, take responsibility and lead change to improve their lives and the lives of others.

I think that children should be included in making important decisions because we are the next generation, so we are the ones that have to deal with the repercussions.

Jennifer W, 13, NSW

Get local problems from the current world and let children debate and discuss worldwide issues. Jessica, 11, NSW

I think that people need to stop viewing us as a little kid that can’t make decisions. Emily, 11, NSW

[Things] could be explained easier and in a way children understand. Ayesha, 11, NSW

Try to make the people aware that you’re old enough to make decisions and contribute your opinion. If they’re aware that you’re able they can give you opportunities. Year 11 student, NSW

Maybe in class you could have something every week where everybody shares and they make decisions together. Primary school student, VIC

My family could ask me questions about what I like? Primary school student, VIC

Something that would make me feel more included at home would be if I could do more things. I don’t really do anything at home and I feel like I would be included if I had to do more stuff and had more responsibilities. Primary school student, VIC

I have made a point of taking all the opportunities that are given to me, and that way even if my voice is small at least it will be out there and someone might have heard it. India, 16, TAS

Schools – no. I think a way of helping us would be to have someone in the school you could talk to about problems with your own teacher, and they could work alongside people who could make a difference. For example, one of my teachers is sad all the time and I can’t talk to them because they don’t relate to students. I could talk to this person who could help improve their teaching and my education. Because I have a right to an education and if my teacher is not educating me the way I need to be taught, then something has got to change. Year 10 student, SA

When I don’t feel included I feel really sad and left out. If I want to feel included I should give more ideas. Jason, 10, VIC

Are we included in decisions?
Children we worry about.

1 CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY
104 responses
Article 26

2 CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMELESS
100 responses
Article 26

3 CHILDREN IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION
59 responses
Article 3

4 CHILDREN WHO HAVE A HARD TIME AT HOME
53 responses
Article 22

5 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN
52 responses
Article 30

6 CHILDREN LIVING WITH A DISABILITY
46 responses
Article 23

7 CHILDREN WHO ARE BULLIED
40 responses
Article 2

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

37
Children living in poverty

ARTICLE 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Many children expressed to us that they were concerned for children who are experiencing economic disadvantage. They highlighted that children who live in poverty are unable to reach their full potential as they often have limited access to essentials such as food, water and shelter. However, children across Australia also suggested that these children are primarily disadvantaged as the financial situation of a family can impact a child’s ability to enjoy quality education. This can ultimately influence the future of these children. Article 26 of the CRC states that the Government should provide support to families to prevent children experiencing poverty.

I really worry about children who have parents that are economically disadvantaged; I don’t think a parent’s wealth should ever be a barrier to their kids’ education. I don’t think the size of a parent’s bank account should determine whether their kids have an education. Jo, 16, TAS

I worry about people below the poverty line because they don’t usually have shelter and food. Finn, 11, SA

Even in today’s society, there are numerous rural societies that don’t have access to sanitation and an efficient health care system. Aniket, 12, ACT

I’m worried about the kids that don’t have enough money in their families to get a proper education. Cait, 14, QLD

I really worry about children being born into poverty; they are being born into a situation where they basically have to struggle and work really hard. High school student, TAS

People who I worry about most are financially disadvantaged people; it’s hard to be happy when that’s all you can worry about. Will, 18, TAS
Children who are homeless

ARTICLE 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Children from across Australia told us that every child should have a home to live in, and that children without homes are a big worry for them. Children also told us that they worry about the impact homelessness has on children, such as being treated disrespectfully or even quitting school at a young age to help their families instead. Many children noticed and were concerned about people who were homeless in their communities – regardless of they were young or old.

Article 27 of the CRC emphasises the importance of a good standard of living for all children - in order to meet their physical and psycho-social needs. Living in a home is really important for children to thrive in every aspect of their daily lives, without the burden of providing for their family, or living with sub-standard living conditions.

The homeless because I feel that we’re not meant to be the only ones under a roof. Neve, 11, TAS

People that live on the street because they are just as important as we are. Jack, 12, SA

Yes there are. I worry a lot about kids who have to live on the streets or have to quit school at a young age and start working to provide for their family. I think that they get treated disrespectfully and when I go to the city I take my pocket money with me to give them the money they need most. For the young workers I try my hardest to give them a big tip. CC, 9, NSW

Children that are homeless are a big worry for me, because it’s very hard for them to get education and food that they need. The Government needs to support them more and look out for them, so that they can have a future. High school student, WA

I worry about the homeless children who are on the streets through no fault of their own. Callan, 15, TAS

I worry about kids who are homeless, and don’t have anyone to go to. Carla, Year 6 student, SA

I worry about a lot of kids who are disadvantaged in Australia. There are a number of homeless kids in Australia for a number of reasons. I feel worried about them because they don’t have equal opportunities. Oliver, 16, TAS
Children we worry about.

**Children in immigration detention**

**ARTICLE 3**: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.

**ARTICLE 22**: Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.

Children from across Australia told us that children in immigration detention are a particular group of children that they worry about. Children had great concerns regarding the wellbeing of children in immigration detention and the long-term effects immigration detention has on each child that is detained. Children highlighted issues which directly affect children such as the separation of families and the barriers that arise for those children who enter Australia with limited knowledge of the English language. Children were also deeply concerned that detention is discriminatory. Through their eyes, they see children being held in detention as an unfair and unnecessarily cruel.

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<td>Children we worry about. Children in detention centres because they must constantly be fearing for their safety.</td>
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<th>High school student, NSW</th>
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<td>I feel like it’s not asylum seekers’ fault with what’s happened where they came from. If they want to come here and start fresh and have a new life, then our Government should let them do that. We’ve all had the chance to start from kindy and grow up. They should have the right to an education too.</td>
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<th>Vivi, 12, QLD</th>
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<td>I worry about the children who have escaped persecution and death, war and famine, and have travelled for months to arrive in Australia, only to be locked up in a detention centre. Not being able to go to school with other children. Not being able to play and feel free. In our national anthem, there is a line: ‘For those who come across the seas, we’ve boundless plains to share.’ The irony has not escaped me. The welfare of these children is what worries me most.</td>
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<th>Maddy, 12, QLD</th>
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<td>I worry about impoverished children and those subject to violence or abuse, as well as those who are discriminated against. Also, I worry for the safety and comfort of child refugees. I feel that more time and money should be put into giving emotional comfort to refugee children through the forging of supporting communities, as well as financial support and education.</td>
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<th>High school student, NSW</th>
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<td>I worry about the refugees because our Prime Minister isn’t letting them come over. And there is a big chance they can die on the boat. I think if they do survive, they would still carry with that with them forever and they would never forget about it.</td>
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<th>High school student, WA</th>
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<td>I don’t think it’s fair that they put refugees in detention centres. If they come from place like Afghanistan, they want to leave the Taliban and it’s not fair that they want to send them back to that kind of place where they’re in danger.</td>
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<th>High school student, WA</th>
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<td>They’re presented really poorly most of the time. It’s like “Stop the boats”, “this is all horrible”. These people are trying to seek refuge from countries at war because they’re scared of dying. I think they should be a lot more lenient about accepting them. Instead of being worried that they’re coming here, I think that we should think of ways to help them instead of rejecting them entirely.</td>
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Children who have a hard time at home

During consultations, many children told us that they are worried about children who are treated badly by their families. Children recognised how some parents can neglect and even abuse children. Children questioned that if these children were not safe with their parents, then where and how could they be safe? Article 19 of the CRC states that children have the right to be safe from violence, abuse or neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them. The children we listened to talked about the importance of feeling safe in their own immediate environment.

At the same time, these children were aware of the complexity involved in detecting or reporting abuse – such as children’s fear of not being believed or a lack of support to report abuse. They suggested establishing an online system where children facing abuse can get better access to help and counselling. Children also highlighted that they were aware of situations of abuse, neglect or self-harming within their friendship groups, but were unsure of how or when to respond to these situations. Sometimes they were aware of situations that adults were unaware of. Children wanted to know more about how they could identify risk and seek support so that they could play a greater role in keeping other children safe.

The CRC stresses that the child’s best interests must be a primary consideration, and for children facing abuse to receive special help in order to restore their self-respect (Articles 9, 19 & 39).

I think children without parents should have rights to be treated like other children do. The government should make children feel safe and know that they all have rights. Wuntok, 10, SA

I worry about children who have no home to live in as every child deserves a place to live. Also I worry about children who are abused by their family, either physically or mentally. It’s important that children feel safe in their own immediate environment. If they don’t feel safe there, then what hope is there to feel safe anywhere else? Stuz, 18, NSW

My best friend who is self-harming. Kids who are depressed and parents who abuse or sexually abuse their kids. Eireanne, 12, NSW

I worry about the children who are neglected and abused especially by their family and even those around them. Children don’t have a say in being born. Sometimes children don’t know what to do because they don’t know that abuse is not okay. Even though especially at home parents would mostly deny it that they are abusing their child. But you can’t really believe the parents you need to believe the child. High school student, NSW

I worry about parents that are abusive – the alcoholics and those that do drugs. They say things that they shouldn’t. High school student, WA

The Child Protection program. The Government doesn’t do much about it and says, “You still have to live with these parents, it’s not that bad.” Chey, 16, SA
Children we worry about.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

ARTICLE 30: Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live, as long as this does not harm others.

Some children told us that they are concerned about the respect for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. In particular, children were concerned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are sometimes socially excluded - and that they may experience racism. Children were particularly worried about the barriers some Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children may face in accessing quality education. It was emphasised that all children in Australia need to be treated fairly and equally, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Children were also aware and concerned that too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not living with their families.

The Indigenous population. Reasons: historical killings; haven’t noticed any at school; not as much access to resources; treated unfairly in past and now tribes are disappearing; they are poorly represented - only got the vote recently and people are racist to them; Australia Day being Invasion Day; people taking over their land; bullying because of their skin colour; exclusion. Primary school student, ACT

I feel Indigenous people are sometimes neglected in society. High school student, TAS

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders who are in remote locations because they can’t get access to healthcare or much education. Particularly for the kids, if they grow up there and that’s all they know, then they’d be quite isolated. Year 8 student, VIC

I worry about people who are Indigenous. I feel that a lot of them are disadvantaged – although some of them aren’t – a lot of them who take opportunities still have stigmas attached to them. Like the idea of being Indigenous is still quite a thing in Australia. As well – people who struggle with their gender identity. I don’t feel there’s any mainstream way to explore that or ratify that, which is something we should work on. Ben, 16, TAS

Aboriginal children worries me, because the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in education is still enormous and the results are still currently appalling. Annie, 16, NSW

I worry about the indigenous Australians as I am of Aboriginal descent and I know I have had it lucky, but others that I have met haven’t so I try to help them as much as possible. AJ, 12, NSW

Racism is a big thing in our school. There are lots of stereotypes against stuff Aboriginal people and Islanders stuff like that. So it’s actually really bad for people’s self-esteem and who they are. And it actually is a really big thing in our school and we have talked about it. I think its really bad and we have right to be who we are and our race is who we are. And people are not letting it happen. High school student, WA
**Children living with a disability**

Children from across Australia told us they are concerned about the respect for the rights of children living with disabilities. They worried that children with disabilities are not always treated equally. They were concerned about how children with disabilities can be treated differently to others, and may be judged or excluded. At the same time, children were very aware of a range of other issues experienced by children with disabilities, such as being bullied. Children highlighted issues with the lack of support for children with disabilities – such as assistance to navigate issues like bullying and social inclusion.

**ARTICLE 23:** Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.

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**Children without homes, people with disabilities because they’re not ‘normal’**. My brother has autism and people think he’s weird and doesn’t belong, and that really hurts me. *Erin M, 12, NSW*

I worry for people who are disabled, because they don’t want to be disabled, but they just get chosen. But it’s also sad to think that when they go to school, people will judge when they go to shops, but they can’t help it. *High school student, WA*

I worry for people with disabilities. I have dyslexia and I worry about them being bullied. When I was in primary school, I got bullied. I kind of just stood up for myself because I had a nice group of friends. Some people had the same disability and they were afraid to stand up for themselves. I didn’t really care though, so I stood up for myself. The Government should help more people and put more opportunities out there for disabled people. They should put ramps in certain public places. *High school student, WA*

Something that really worries me is the children that stutter. I’ve grown up as a child that stutters but with the help in a spiritual way and with my therapist, I ended holding myself up and continuing my life in a positive way. But how do I know children around the world will be provided with what I was provided with. So that’s something I really think about. *Asalah, Year 12 student, NSW*

Disabled kids and how they are treated, sometimes I think they can be underestimated. They have their own creative minds, they are just the same as us, just more of a challenge. *High school student, TAS*

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**Disabled homes [are important to me] because normally they (the Government) just send disabled people to nursing homes and that’s not where they (disabled people) belong!**

*Grace, 9, VIC*
Children who are bullied

ARTICLE 2: The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

During consultations, children told us that they worry for those children who are being bullied. They recognise the importance of being a friend to those experiencing bullying, as well as how common bullying is in Australian schools. Children were aware and troubled by the impact of bullying, such as changing who they are as a person to avoid bullying. Children talked about their concerns regarding new platforms used for bullying, such as the internet and that they are worried that someone might cyber bully them. They were deeply aware of the long term consequences bullying can have, as well as feeling despondent about the ability to stop bullies. Some children felt that involving adults would make the bullying worse. The CRC tells us that children need to be protected from all forms of violence and that children who are being abused should receive special help in order to restore their self-respect (Articles 19 & 39).

People at school that they might cyber bully me. Ben, 13, NSW

Sometimes I worry about people who have to be different to fit in. Sometimes I feel kids have to change who they are as a person to fit in. Matilda, 11, NSW

I feel pretty bad for the children that get bullied a lot at school. They don’t get the same respect for that we do or I do! Because lot of this stuff leads to pretty bad consequences. People thinking badly about people! And it can really actually emotionally affect them for rest of their lives if you get bullied. That’s not good for children. High school student, NSW

If someone gets bullied, don’t be a bystander. Help them out and help them up. Be nice to them and make friends so they aren’t sad.

Chevelle, 9, SA

The kids I care about most are the people who are being bullied. I don’t like bullies. Primary school student, VIC

I worry about the kids who get bullied by anybody. No one really will help them with it. The school tells them to stop it but the kids don’t really stop. Josh, 15, TAS

There are no children in Australia that I worry about but bullies because I sometimes get bullied. William, 10, WA

Most people usually bully people because they got bullied themselves. But I don’t think that’s a good reason to bully someone. High school student, VIC
Advice for our National Children’s Commissioner.

1. **ENCOURAGEMENT**
   - 89 responses
   - Article 4

2. **IMPROVE EDUCATION**
   - 58 responses
   - Article 29

3. **CHILDREN NEED TO BE HEARD MORE**
   - 39 responses
   - Article 28

4. **ADDRESS BULLYING**
   - 33 responses
   - Article 2
   - Article 6

5. **RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT CHILDREN’S RIGHTS**
   - 29 responses
   - Article 4

6. **ADDRESS POVERTY**
   - 29 responses
   - Article 24
   - Article 26

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Encouragement

**ARTICLE 4:** Governments should make these rights available to children.

Australia’s first National Children’s Commissioner was appointed in 2013. When we ran our consultations we explained that the National Children’s Commissioner is a person who has the job for monitoring the situation for all children in Australia. This includes regularly checking how children are going in every State and Territory, finding out what issues they are facing or if there are particular groups of children who are having their rights violated, and telling our Government what they need to do to best support children.

Many children did not know that we have a National Children’s Commissioner, but were happy and thankful to find out that there was someone who has the job of speaking up for children in Australia. As 10 year old Egan said: “Thank you for commissioning nationally.”

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**I love the fact that there is someone out there like you who really care and respects children's rights and responsibilities.**

Emily, 11, NSW

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Thank you for commissioning nationally. Egan, 10, ACT

Hello and well done, you are being very kind to all the children of Australia! Well done again you are making happiness spread over Australia. Absi, 11, WA

I would like to say good job to being a great woman to everyone and standing up for what is right. Shentel, 12, NSW

I want to say thank you for the support you guys have been giving. Keep up what you’re doing. Even if you can help just one child, you can make a difference. High school student, NSW

Hi Megan, kids need better rights because police don’t protect them enough because bad people can like take them, but otherwise good job with the rights. Primary school student, SA

The Commissioner does a great job protecting the children’s rights and making people aware of the rights of a child. Year 6 student, QLD

I would thank and appreciate her for supporting children. I would recommend she makes branches in other countries because children there are having terrible lives. High school student, VIC
Improve education

ARTICLE 29: Education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

When we asked children from around the nation what they would like to say to the National Children’s Commissioner, one of the most common responses was for education to be improved. These children see education as a basis or foundation of their world and a means of building their relationships with their peers, family and the world around them.

But the children and young people that we spoke to also thought that there is still room for improvement in Australia’s education system. Issues mentioned included: access, such as an inability to pay for education, decision-making in regards to education often does not take children’s opinions into consideration, and inadequate resourcing for schools in rural towns and in areas of low socio-economic status.

The CRC highlights the importance of education for the wellbeing and development of all children (Articles 28 & 29). While the majority of children in Australia have excellent opportunities in education, there are specific groups of children who are still missing out on equal opportunity and support in receiving a quality education. The children we listened to specifically mentioned children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children from refugee backgrounds, children with disabilities, children with learning difficulties, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

THINGS THAT MATTER

That we could have more school support in classes because some people i have noticed have difficulty learning. Tom, 13, WA

I would like to ask her if maths and science could be improved in all schools, especially in primary schools. Yud, 12, ACT

I believe that there are children in Australia that need your help especially towns and rural areas or family with troubled backgrounds. Children need to receive proper education even with the limited support of the families. So you should be able to help them develop even if it’s just little bit. In the end, the long run gains are immense. Then they go on to get jobs and provide for this country. The more education you give to these children no matter how disadvantaged they are it will help Australia in the long run. High school student, NSW

The Government should stop improving this country and making it the top country to live in and make it safer to live in and give medicines to people that need it. Education wise, they need to provide more for schools and stuff. High school student, WA

Try to help children have their rights in poor countries especially donate school books so they can study at home at least. Year 6 student, QLD

I am really concerned about the price of education and not all children in Australia getting the same education. Sophie, 15, TAS

I think the programs for kids who don’t want to go to school and who want to learn life skills – I think that’s great. Eva, 16, TAS

I would request that the school uniform is cheaper. It’s really expensive to get a school uniform and books, and it’s a bit much for people starting school. High school student, VIC

Public schools need more help. Primary school student, NSW

I believe that education is the basis of all society; I think Australia should reflect this more in our actions. India, 16, TAS
ARTICLE 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

The CRC states in both Article 12 and 13 that children have the right to be involved in decision-making, gathering information and for them to be listened to. When we asked children and young people what they would like to say to the National Children’s Commissioner, they voiced concern about being heard more. These children see the right to freedom of expression and the ability to be actively involved in decision-making as a rite of passage in enabling them to take control of their needs, take healthy risks, build resilience and set out strong pathway for their future.

Please have more input from children because even though they’re children they can still have life-changing ideas. Laura, 12, NSW

There could be a children’s ideas day where children give their ideas about things that could be made in the future. Clancy, 7, QLD

I think that Australia should pay more attention to the young people of Australia because we are the next generation so we are the next people running Australia – it affects us not you. Jennifer W, 13, NSW

Children should be able to have a voice and it should be loud enough to hear. Lexie G, 11, NSW

I think we should have a bigger chance to have our own say. I know we already have it but think we should expand it to Parliament and a lot more stuff. Year 8 student, WA

I reckon kids, well she probably knows this, but kids know a lot of things maybe adults don’t take into account. For instance, if they hear something, like it’s something they haven’t heard before, they hear a lot of stuff. Primary school student, VIC

I think that every child should have their say and rights helping kids be safe in a more welcoming community. Year 6 student, QLD

Help children to make their own decisions. Year 6 student, QLD

It’s important to get children involved as well because they understand other children. Because it’s for children. Rachael, 16, TAS

To get children involved with what’s happening in Australia, one of the biggest mistakes they make is not including us and by the time we are 18 we don’t know what to say because we have never thought about it before. Miriam 15, TAS
**Address bullying**

**ARTICLE 2:** The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say and whatever type of family they come from.

**ARTICLE 6:** Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Children across Australia told us that they would like the National Children’s Commissioner to address bullying. These children identified bullying as a barrier which can prevent them from being part of a safe community. They thought that they, in partnership with adults and decision-makers, needed to raise the awareness of bullying and the affect it has on their lives. After listening to what the children had to say about the issue, particular aspects of bullying that troubled them became apparent: discrimination towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; all forms of racism; the high levels of self-harm and suicide; and prejudiced remarks and attitudes towards children with disabilities.

Article 19 of the CRC places importance on being protected from being all forms of violence. Children and young people in Australia need to know that they have a right not to be bullied or harassed. Children that we listened to were aware of this right, but believed that society needs to be more aware of bullying and place more importance on stopping it.

I think aboriginal children should have the same rights not be discriminated against. *Toby, 16, TAS*

Raising awareness about suicide and self-harm. Kids are being put under so much pressure from themselves, other students, their family and the media. I think it’s hard for people to fit in and that they can get help and that kind of stuff. *Year 10 student, VIC*

If people have lost body parts like they’re legs or arms, people shouldn’t make fun of them and laugh. *High school student, WA*

I think children schools we should have more talks about bullying and how to deal with bullying and children rights and more people actually coming and discussing tell us how to deal with it. And what we think about it and more talks like we are having now. It’s actually good for children that are struggling. So I think we should have more of that. That actually good for us and it give us confidents to deal with stuffs to deal with things what’s been happening in our life’s. And it makes us feel better about ourselves. We know what to do whenever it happens. *High school student, NSW*

Help stop bullying. Make campaigns. Do anything to stop it. *Ballerina, 12, NSW*

I think you’re doing a great job. But i think you should focus more on bullying and i think we (children) can use a few chaplains that understand us. *Ashani, 12, NSW*

I would like her to know that sometimes children break their own rights. So they’re sometimes a bully and that sort of stuff. So keep an eye on them as well. *Primary school student, VIC*

Make sure little children are never bullied. *Primary school student, WA*

In year 7 or 8 we had these people come in and do a role play about bullying. It really caught our attention and they did it really well. I think there should be more things like this. *Year 10 student, VIC*

That some kids do struggle simply at school or living their lives and these problems should be eliminated such as bullies or unsafe communities. *Nick, 11, NSW*
Raise awareness about children’s rights

ARTICLE 4: Governments should make these rights available to children.

“Let’s work together to make children’s rights a regularly talked about topic.” All children should have all their rights fulfilled, all of the time. Children want to know more about their rights, and from a young age.

The children we listened to expressed concern about particular groups of children who they thought were at risk of having their rights violated. This included children who are refugees, in immigration detention, in out of home care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children who are experiencing bullying, and children who are experiencing neglect and/or abuse need special attention and protection. Their rights are more at risk of violation and the children we spoke to requested that the National Children’s Commissioner “keep an eye” on these children to make sure their rights are being fulfilled.

The children in our consultations were also aware that people of all ages and parts of society are responsible for making sure children’s rights are fulfilled and protected. Some adults still ‘break’ children’s rights, and so do other children. More awareness about children’s rights would help all members of society protect and speak up for the rights of children.

I would like to say to her that she needs to make sure the children who need her know she is there for them. And how to contact her.

Sophie, 11, NSW

Please keep protecting children’s rights and please make sure you are keeping a track or bullying and cyber bullying to help and support these kids and to make them feel that they belong. Frankie, 10, TAS

If i got the chance to meet her I would like to say please come to my school and give us a talk about what your job is. Isabelle, 11, NSW

Hello there, just wanted to say please help all the children who can’t get their rights and please help those kids who are homeless or in foster care. Primary school student, SA

Hi just wanted to say something so that children with disabilities can have the same rights as us. Primary school student, SA

Thank you for your work. Maybe to have programs about certain things issued out to children in schools – especially disadvantaged schools. Programs about rights, racism, discrimination and all these kinds of things. Aisha, High school student, NSW

I think aboriginal children should have the same rights not be discriminated against. Toby, 16, TAS

Let’s work together to make children’s rights a regularly talked about topic. Behind the News website

I think every child should have the same rights. Luce, 10, WA

I would want her to come and talk to me and my friends about her job and what’s important. Chantys, 11, NSW
Address poverty

ARTICLE 24: Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Children we consulted thought that poverty and inequality still posed barriers to children’s rights being fulfilled, even here in Australia. They asked the National Children’s Commissioner to pay special attention to children who are living in poverty, or at risk of experiencing poverty. Children identified financial and social disadvantage as factors which could limit children’s rights being fulfilled – in education, health, safety and future opportunity.

"Hi. I think Australia should spend more money on aid for the poor."

Smarty, 10, NSW

Every child should have a family, parents, food, water, a home and people who can spend time with them, love them and care for them. Lara, 9, NSW

That some kids do struggle simply at school or living their lives and these problems should be eliminated etc. bullies or unsafe communities. Nick, 11, NSW

I would like all Australian kids to all get some food. Mackenna, 9, TAS

The government should donate more to children’s charities and stuff instead of toll roads, because children are more important to the world than toll roads or stuff like that. Primary school student, VIC

Please help children in war torn countries to have the basic things they need like water. Primary school student, SA

Make sure indigenous and homeless people are safe. Primary school student, ACT

I am really concerned about the price of education and not all children in Australia are getting the same education. Sophie, 15, TAS

I worry about kids that are more unfortunate than me or kids that have so many problems or really big ones that it ruins opportunities for them. Also children that have big family, school or friend problems that worries them. Mia, 10, TAS

Yes, I worry about children who are brought up in lower socio-economic environments who don’t have good role models because they become a product of their environment and it can be detrimental to their future. Jessica, 18, NSW

Children without roofs over their heads, because they would feel vulnerable to attacks and weather. Primary school student, NSW
Government spending.

1 EDUCATION
2 HEALTH
3 POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA
4 HOMELESSNESS
5 OVERSEAS AID

6 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
7 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
8 REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

225 responses
120 responses
91 responses
74 responses
68 responses

64 responses
58 responses
39 responses

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Children from across Australia told us that they would like Government to prioritise spending on education. Children saw education as a fundamental and important part of fulfilling their dreams and becoming who they aspire to be in life.

However, Australia’s children are also very aware that quality education is not accessible for every child. They emphasised that every child in Australia should be able to learn without worrying if they can pay for education or not. Their concerns extend to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children living in rural areas who may have greater trouble accessing quality education.

The CRC emphasises the importance of education to the wellbeing and development of all children (Articles 28 & 29). While the majority of Australian children have excellent opportunities in education, there are specific groups of children who are still missing out on equal opportunity and support in receiving a quality education.

I think the Government should spend its money on making every child in Australia be able to go to school and make sure everyone fits in. They should encourage children to include one another and organise programs to talk to schools about respecting one another and showing interest in them because you never know how nice someone could be until you dig a little deeper and discover. *Matilda, 11, NSW*

The Government should spend more on universities, especially because of the courses. I’ve been saving up little by little since I was 6 and I haven’t got a quarter of what it’s worth for my course, if I manage to get into it. *High school student, WA*

I think health and education is a major issue in Australia. We say that we can afford an education in Australia – but if you can’t go to uni, the chances of getting a job are very slim because you don’t have a degree. If you’re going to raise university prices, then a lot of people are going to choose not to go to uni. *Year 11 student, NSW*

Funding schools that need the money, even if they are not in Australia. Our school has received money and they are using it to get a fake grass oval I don’t think we need that money. *Gretel, 12, NSW*

I think the Government should spend more money on schools – because up in regional areas – like up in Darwin – kids don’t have access to quality education. Like Aboriginal kids. If you don’t get the right education you don’t grow up to be a good person. *Year 10 student, VIC*

The Government should spend quite a bit of its money on education, as if we don’t have enough education, we won’t be able to produce smart people to be things that we need, like scientists. *Freya, 10, NSW*

A big part of becoming who we want to be is learning in school, because then we will be smart enough to have many more opportunities. I also think they should make school a more fun and exciting place, as many of my friends hate school, and if we liked school, we would learn more and concentrate better. *Freya, 10, NSW*

Education, duhhhhhh. *Maddison, 11, WA*

Books for reading in schools. *Melvin, 12, TAS*
Health

ARTICLE 24: Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

The children we consulted nominated health as the second most important thing the Government should spend its money on. They emphasised that healthcare should be free. More funding should be given towards medical research, hospitals and caring for people with long-term illness or who are elderly. A small number of children also mentioned that mental health should receive just as much attention as other health-related issues.

The CRC states that all children have the right to good quality health care so that they can stay healthy (Article 24).

Making sick kids feel at home. They don’t feel comfortable and to get them through what they’re going through, it’s nice. High school student, WA

I think it should go on health, because nowadays, something like being tested for cancer can cost someone a couple of hundred dollars just to see if it is cancer. Year 11 student, NSA

I think that you should spend your money on hospitals and people in need of it, because you don’t usually see people on the streets but there are people out there – and it really worries me. Primary school student, VIC

Public health services, rather than have private companies taking over everything and making everything cost massive amounts of money. Free healthcare that everyone can get no matter what your circumstances are. Year 8 student, VIC

I think the Government should spend its money on people with cancer and diseases if they can’t afford the payments. Michelle, 12, VIC

I think the Government should spend money on research for diseases that are happening all over the world that are affecting children, women and all people. Maxine 15, TAS

I think the Government should spend money on hospitals and medicines. Jess, 11, NSW

Homes and doctors to make the kids better that are sick. F, 9, NSW

The Government should spend money on a better health system. Because I went to the doctor and I had to wait 3 hours.

Phillip, 18, VIC
Poverty in Australia

ARTICLE 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

ARTICLE 27: Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

A number of children thought the Government should spend more money on addressing poverty in Australia. Children thought it was unfair that any person should be living in poverty in a wealthy country like Australia. As with many issues children discussed, it was unfair for anyone to be living in poverty, regardless of who they were or where in the world they were. The children we heard from also mentioned that financial support for those living below the poverty line should be matched with equal opportunities and support to find employment. Importantly, children did not think that addressing poverty in Australia should occur at the expense of other issues – such as our foreign aid contribution.

The CRC states that Governments should ensure all children in their countries have an adequate standard of living and have their basic needs for health and survival met. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this (Article 24).

I hope Tony Abbott is being fair to poor kids. Will, 7, VIC

I think the Government should make our social welfare system more focused on giving people more opportunities in addition to handouts. Because around 30-40% of Tasmanians rely on some kind of welfare and that’s money that could be used in education and other things. I think that people would rather have the opportunity to support themselves – it would raise their self-esteem. Year 10 student, TAS

I think the Government should spend its money on making kids feel safe that don’t feel safe and helping people that live on the street and giving them more stuff like a home. Year 10 student, TAS

I think the Government should spend its money on the poor, for shelters, food and water. Year 6 student, VIC

I think the Government should spend its money on recognising people in poverty, helping people who need it. Student, 15, TAS

Helping those who need it most. Those who go without day after day. Courtney, 18, SA

A good amount of money on poor [children] and aufens (sic) [orphans]. Archer, 9, QLD

People in poverty- we should help them start again and live their dreams. Primary school student, ACT
Homelessness

ARTICLE 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

ARTICLE 27: Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

We have heard directly from children that they want the Government to focus more on financially supporting people who do not have homes. For the children we spoke to, home represented safety and a chance to live better lives. Given this, they were concerned about children experiencing homelessness. A home was linked to conditions that help children develop physically, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially.

Children consulted were aware that the level of child and youth homelessness is high and that there are not enough houses to meet demand. They were concerned that children experiencing homelessness are in vulnerable positions, and could be exposed to physical and mental harm.

The CRC emphasises the importance of the government’s role in ensuring that all children survive and develop healthily (Articles 26 & 27). The right to life, survival and development is still not fully realised for some children in Australia. This is illustrated by the fact that almost half of all homeless people in Australia are under the age of 18.
Every kid is safe. Every kid in the world has rights and some kids get left out – like some kids in Africa are homeless, lonely, have had their parents die. The Government needs to spend money on caring for everyone.

Primary school student, VIC

I think that Government should spend more money on creating world peace. Because if we want world peace, why are we spending more money on creating armies, guns, bombs and all that stuff when we could create world peace.

Year 11 student, NSW

I think the Government should spend its money on ending poverty and helping children that don’t have things in different countries that they need to survive.

Year 6 student, SA

Spend more money on war-torn countries where children are suffering, like Palestine. Send more money to help the kids.

Year 9 student, WA

Putting taps around in other parts of the world so that people have things to drink.

Year 6 student, SA

Help refugees have a better life in Australia instead of sending them overseas.

Primary school student, ACT

The foreign aid should be directed at where the refugees are coming from.

Year 10 student, SA

To the Government: please end poverty.

Abdirhman, 9, SA

Every kid is safe. Every kid in the world has rights and some kids get left out – like some kids in Africa are homeless, lonely, have had their parents die. The Government needs to spend money on caring for everyone.

Primary school student, VIC

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The foreign aid should be directed at where the refugees are coming from.

Year 10 student, SA
Many children had ideas for things that would improve their immediate communities. These were very sprawling and varied, so we decided to group these under the theme of ‘community development’. Their suggestions included: more parks for exercise, bigger roads for bikes, sports equipment, things to keep kids on the street entertained, places and spaces where people who are homeless can live and feel safe, more childcare centres, swimming pools, zoos, nice places for people or children who are sick, safe roads, fixing up homes, national parks, more creative programs and places; programs for kids who are at risk, and more community services for children, young people and families. Children have good ideas for how they would like to improve their communities for everyone.
Environment and climate change

Children have the right to a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Many of the children we listened to recognised that human life and rights are intrinsically linked to the health and resources of our natural environment. Many children listed environmental sustainability as something they wanted the Government to pay more attention to – in policy and funding.

I care about the environment and animals because I believe they are no different because we are both living. Stop chopping so many trees. **Jasmine, 11, VIC**

I think the Government should spend money on finding homes for those who don’t have any. But I would like them to also consider the environment. **Caitlyn, 12, NSW**

Helping other countries and at least try to save the environment. **Lara, 9, NSW**

I think the Government should spend more money on making Australia more sustainable, using the environment for the better. **High school student, TAS**

I think the Government should spend their money on solars because then they would stop mining and running the environment for kids to play in. **Primary school student, VIC**

I think the Government should spend money on climate change policies as well as foreign aid. **Eden, 14, TAS**

I believe the Government should spend its money on renewable energy and sustainability because at the end of the day, global warming concerns everyone worldwide. **Zoe, 15, TAS**

More sustainable/re-useable energy, protecting our forests and endangered animals, better education, protecting fish and other ocean species, promoting sustainable fishing, supporting sustainable fishing and supporting organic industries/farms. **Ella, 16, TAS**

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I think the Government should spend its money on trying to stop the global warming because if it continues then the world is going to eventually turn into a place which is really hard to live in.

**Lula, VIC**
Refugees and asylum seekers

ARTICLE 22: Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.

Many children expressed concern throughout the consultation about Australia’s response to refugees and asylum seekers. Many identified that people were seeking refuge in Australia because they were fleeing from conflict and persecution. The children we listened through thought the Government should respond with assistance, instead of deterrence, to people who had left their home country because it was unsafe. Children who come to Australia as refugees are entitled to the same rights as all children in our country (Article 22).

Refugees shouldn’t be in detention centres for that long. They might not have all their credentials but surely the process can’t take that many years to get one person’s credentials across. They’re coming for a reason; they wouldn’t just leave their country because they don’t like it. *High school student, SA*

Being accepting of people who come to our country. Refugees and asylum seekers shouldn’t be in detention centres. *High school student, VIC*

They always treat the refugees badly but if it was the other way around and if Australia was a war-torn country, and they got treated like that, they wouldn’t like that. *High school student, WA*

I want them to help asylum seeker people who don’t have family here – because some of them have lots of problems. I know Australia gives lots of help for asylum seekers, but I need to say thanks to Mr Abbott for helping us – but we need more help for asylum seekers living in Australia. *High school student, VIC*

We should be a more welcoming society to the refugees because they’re coming from horrible places. They are deeply scarred people who need safety. It’s not easy for them to come to Australia. They’re on a life-threatening boat, paid all their money to get on it, left their family and friends and everything they know to come to a country where they probably don’t even know the language. It’s not easy for them but they just need that safety. *High school student, SA*

I think the most important thing right now for Australia is a second opinion on all the decisions we make and not for anything ridiculous to happen (such as ‘stop the boats’). *Will, 11, VIC*
The UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors are a powerful team of child rights advocates. With diverse skills and life experiences, these ten young Australians are brought together by their shared passion for speaking up for the rights of children.

The Young Ambassador program is a one-year, voluntary role. Young people aged 15-24 join UNICEF Australia to lend their voices, perspectives, ideas and time to further children’s rights being realised in Australia and around the world. They build their child rights knowledge and advocacy skills in partnership with the UNICEF Australia team.

Learn more about the program at: [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)

Appendix 1:
Who participated in these consultations?

28 schools (kindergarten, primary and secondary)  
1157 children

Online survey  
285 children

Girl Guides NSW & ACT  
93 children

Total  
1535 children

Additional information about who we consulted:
These numbers included children in urban, regional and remote communities.

We did not record the gender split of our consultations, however most schools had a fairly even gender representation within the consultations. The online survey included 159 female and 122 male respondents. The 93 children consulted from Girl Guides NSW & ACT were all female.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children in out of home care, and children from asylum-seeker/refugee backgrounds were included in our consultations. Overall, the consultations included significant numbers of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We did not run targeted consultations with any of these groups for this report.

Numbers by State/Territory (all participants):

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<th>SA</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>TAS</th>
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Appendix 2:  
How was this information gathered?

**Time-frame**  
15th September 2014 to 10th November 2014

**Steps**  
The UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors (Young Ambassadors) and advocacy staff decided on seven questions which we would ask all children: we hoped these would elicit children’s views on the five core areas of Convention on the Rights of the Child. These areas are: non-discrimination; best interests of the child; survival, growth & development; protection and participation. The questions can be found in Appendix 3.

1. UNICEF Australia contacted all schools on our database via email, asking if they would be interested in taking part in a consultation.

2. We confirmed consultations schools who expressed interest, and who we could reach geographically in the time-frame we had.

3. ABC’s Behind the News created an online survey where any children could submit their responses to the seven questions. This was open from the 16th of September 2014 to 10th of October 2014.

4. The Young Ambassadors underwent additional training with UNICEF Australia staff so that they were prepared to run consultations with children and young people.

*Things that Matter online survey on Behind the News*
5. The Young Ambassadors and UNICEF Australia staff visited schools and ran a child rights workshop and consultation following this format:

- Introductions (5 minutes)
- Whole-group agreement on how we will treat each other so everyone is safe and able to share their views (10 minutes)
- Child rights workshop/presentation (20–30 minutes)
- Explanation of the purpose of this project and intended audience (5 minutes)
- Short video with the consultation questions played (1 minute)
- Children and facilitator sit in a circle: children take turns to share their views to the different questions. Responses recorded on a phone. Votes taken on frequently mentioned issues. (30–60 minutes depending on the size of the group)
- Children spend time writing a statement about what was important to them and why (not in all consultations)
- Some children participated in an individual photo (not in all consultations)
- Wrap up & recap on next steps (2 minutes)
- Children participating in these consultations gave their written permission and had parent/guardian permission to take part in this project.

6. All consultations were transcribed and submitted to UNICEF Australia staff.
The thing that I am most worried about is bullying.
Beth, 14, TAS

33% said that they sometimes felt included in decisions made about their lives at home and at school.

I feel worried because other people are in Africa – my family and my friends.
Natalia, High School student, VIC

### THINGS THAT MATTER

7. Individual child statements (transcribed) were entered into a spreadsheet which was split by question. Each statement was ‘tagged’ with themes that were mentioned in the statement. Many statements included more than one theme (eg: family, education, safety and pets). Themes were decided based on the most frequently mentioned themes children discussed. Not all themes recorded are captured in this report, as the numbers of mentions were too small.

8. The Young Ambassadors curated a selection of statements for the top themes in each question, which best represented the diversity of views expressed on these themes. They tried to get a balanced representation of age and state in the statements chosen. The Young Ambassadors then wrote a short summary for each theme to give the statements context.

9. Almost every step in this process has been led by the Young Ambassadors, with the support of UNICEF Australia staff. This is in keeping with our commitment to facilitating meaningful participation of children and young people.

Two samples of children’s written statements, made during their consultations.
Appendices.

**Appendix 3: Consultation questions**

1. What is important to you? Why?
2. Do you feel safe in your local community? What would make you feel more safe?
3. What worries you?
4. Do you feel included in decisions that are made at home/school/with family?
5. We know that kids have different lives and experiences, are there children in Australia that you worry about? Why?
6. We have a National Children’s Commissioner. What would you like to say to her?
7. What do you think the government should spend its money on?

**Appendix 4: Number of responses by theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s important to you and why?</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total responses</td>
<td>1028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, water, shelter</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play/recreation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets/animals</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that many responses listed two or more themes within the response.*
The thing that I am most worried about is bullying.
Beth, 14, TAS

33% said that they sometimes felt included in decisions made about their lives at home and at school.

I feel worried because other people are in Africa – my family and my friends.
Natalia, High School student, VIC

Do you feel safe in your local community? What would make you feel more safe?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>882</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for feeling safe**

- My neighbours make me feel safe: 89
- My family and friends keep me safe: 58

**Reasons for feeling unsafe**

- Violence: 48
- Break-ins: 44
- The news: 29
- Bullying: 19
- Drugs/alcohol and smoking: 18
- Unsafe roads: 15
- Walking alone at night: 14

What worries you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>773</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something happening to my family/friends: 121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future: 85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War: 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence: 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime: 71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety in the community: 57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying: 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress at school: 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure: 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing: 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster: 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs and alcohol: 33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebola/deadly disease: 31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism: 27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being judged: 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change: 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The news: 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government: 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being scared of the dark: 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress at home: 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not getting into uni: 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe roads: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image: 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you feel included in decisions made at home and at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>738</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes: 52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes: 33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More at home: 36%
More at school: 64%

* Please note that many responses listed two or more themes within the response.
### Are there groups of children in Australia that you worry about? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>675</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children living in poverty</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who are homeless</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in detention/refugees</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have a hard time at home</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with disabilities</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who are abused</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who are bullied</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who don’t have family</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who experience discrimination</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who are sick</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who don’t get a quality education</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who experience mental illness</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who do drugs/alcohol</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends being safe</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What would you like to tell our National Children’s Commissioner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>556</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve education</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children need to be heard more</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address bullying</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address poverty</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise awareness about children’s rights</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children to be safe</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help refugee and asylum seeker children</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce child/youth homelessness</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address mental health in young people</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children who are having a difficult time with family</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support children with disabilities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Aboriginal children</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More support for children who have no family</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address drug and alcohol abuse</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What do you think the Government should spend its money on?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total responses</th>
<th>657</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty in Australia</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas aid</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/climate change</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees/asylum seekers</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please note that many responses listed two or more themes within the response.
Bibliography

In addition to the primary source of children’s statements, recommendations in this report were based in the following sources:


