
“LISTEN TO US... WE ARE THE NEXT GENERATION”

Report on the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians ‘Tell Us What You Think’ Survey of Children and Young People



A REPORT BY THE ACT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSIONER

JUNE 2020



CHILDREN & YOUNG
PEOPLE COMMISSIONER
ACT Human Rights Commission

“LISTEN TO US... WE ARE THE NEXT GENERATION”

Report on the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians ‘Tell Us What You Think’ Survey of Children and Young People

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PACYPC Legislative Remit

On 1 April 2016, the offices of the Public Advocate (PA) and the Children and Young People Commissioner (CYPC) were brought together as part of the restructured ACT Human Rights Commission. Broadly these two independent statutory roles involve legislative responsibility for protecting and promoting the rights and interests of people in the ACT who are experiencing vulnerability, and for consulting with children and young people in ways that promote their participation in decision-making.

While the role of Children and Young People Commissioner is obviously a targeted one with a focus on ensuring that relevant stakeholders listen to and seriously consider the views of children and young people, the role of Public Advocate extends to all persons within the ACT whose situation or condition gives rise to a need for protection from abuse, exploitation or neglect, or a combination of those things.

The responsibilities of the PACYPC are underpinned by a range of functions including advocacy (individual and systemic), representation, investigation, and monitoring. Some of these functions are specific to children and young people, and others encompass people with complex disability needs, including those with mental health conditions and/or forensic patients.

Overarching these functions is a strong focus on ensuring that the PACYPC's monitoring and oversight functions (and the recommendations that we make to government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, and practices) contribute to improvements in the accessibility, responsiveness and quality of supports and services that are available for persons experiencing vulnerability.

In the role of Children and Young People Commissioner, I have a number of responsibilities including, but not limited to, promoting children and young people's rights, and encouraging and supporting people who provide services for children and young people to continue to improve those services.

Notably, I also have the responsibility to consult with children and young people themselves, to hear what they have to say, and to make sure their views help improve services. The ACT considers the views of children and young people to be so important they have included the need to engage them directly in legislation. Amongst other things, the ACT *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* states that:

In exercising the children and young people commissioner's functions, the commissioner must endeavour to —

- a) consult with children and young people in ways that promote their participation in decision-making; and*
- b) listen to and seriously consider the views of children and young people...*

This report is a direct product of exercising these functions.

FORWARD FROM THE COMMISSIONER

As the ACT Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, I have the privileged responsibility of protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people, including by ensuring they have opportunities to have their views heard and taken seriously. In doing so, I try to make sure we hear from ACT children and young people with a diverse range of experiences.



Being effective in advocating for children's rights relies on me being constantly open to new ideas, to new ways of operating, to opportunities that enable me to add new tools to my toolbox... and my teachers are often children and young people themselves.

Doing my role well requires a willingness to create a space for the voice of our children and young people, and the ability to take others on a journey that has them understand that we need to support and respond to what those with lived experience (children and young people themselves) tell us will make a difference in their lives.

This report began with an idea... what if children and young people were given the chance to shape the agenda for a national meeting of children's Commissioners and Guardians from all over Australia and New Zealand!

While we may not have fully achieved what we had set out to do nationally, given the vast majority of survey respondents were from the ACT, what we heard substantiated many of our existing priorities while also paving the way for new topics to be introduced into our discussions.

I am privileged to be able to represent the views of ACT children and young people through this report and I thank those who took the time to respond and let us know about the things that are important to them. I also thank the many stakeholders on our distribution list and community members on social media who supported this project by distributing the survey and encouraging children and young people to participate.

I hope this report gives you some insights into the things that children and young people think about and that you use this to consider how you can seek and incorporate the views of children and young people in your own operations, whether personally or professionally. Together we can commit to making Canberra a place in which children and young people are confident they will be listened to and taken seriously about things that matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Griffiths-Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jodie Griffiths-Cook
Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
ACT Human Rights Commission

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (PACYPC) envisions a Canberra that encourages and empowers children and young people, including by ensuring they participate in decisions affecting their lives. To this end, she strongly advocates for policy-makers and service agencies to generate opportunities that directly involve children and young people in shaping and influencing change in the services and systems with which they engage and for this to become mainstream practice.

The promotion and advancement of children's rights, protections and participation is central to the work of the PACYPC who is committed to a child-safe, child-friendly Canberra.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There are a number of legislative and human rights frameworks that guide the PACYPC's work. These include, but are not limited to, the *Human Rights Act 2004* (HR Act), the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* (HRC Act) and the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (the UNCRC).

The UNCRC is the key international treaty on children's rights and assists to elucidate the content of rights protected in the HR Act where relevant to children and young people. Equally, all these frameworks acknowledge the importance of "children's rights to protection, participation and provision of services"¹ as foundational components.

Simply stated, children and young people participation is underpinned by three core tenets:

- **Empowerment** to provide children and young people with greater control over their lives.
- **Purposeful engagement** to enable children and young people to take on valued roles, address issues that are relevant to them and influence real outcomes.
- **Inclusiveness** that supports all children and young people to participate.²

Significantly, participation and empowerment of children and young people are fundamental components of a child-safe, child-friendly community with lasting benefits such as:

- Facilitating the empowerment and participation of children and young people enhances a culture of child safety and encourages actively listening to children and young people as an integral component of the child-safe operations of organisations.
- Involving and consulting with children and young people enables organisations to improve their policies, practices and services by taking account of the unique perspectives of children and young people, particularly in respect of what makes them feel safe and unsafe.

¹ Powell, MA; Graham, A; Canosa, A; Anderson, D (2020), '*Child safety in policy: Who is being kept safe and from what?*', Social Policy and Administration Journal- March 2020

² Yerp, Involve Young People-Youth participation and engagement explained. <https://yerp.yacvic.org.au/get-started/involve-young-people/youth-participation-and-engagement-explained>

- Children and young people learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop an understanding of collaboration and rights.
- Children and young people are more likely to report abuse or concerns if they feel safe and empowered in the organisation.
- Children and young people feel their views are valued and listened to.
- Children and young people are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved.³
- Participation promotes and protects equality of opportunity.

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONERS AND GUARDIANS

As independent statutory officers, Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG) are mandated to promote the best interests of children and young people and ensure that their views and interests are heard and influential, noting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori children and young people often experience disproportionate disadvantage.

The ANZCCG comprises national, state and territory children and young people commissioners, guardians and advocates, and the eSafety Commissioner.

The ANZCCG aims to promote and protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia and New Zealand by:

- promoting the rights of children and young people, including their right to participate in decisions relating to them, as articulated in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*;
- ensuring the best interests of children and young people are considered in the development of policies and programs;
- giving voice to the views of, and encouraging direct consultation with, children and young people on matters that affect them; and
- encouraging systemic improvement, informed by evidence-based research, in areas that impact on the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people.

The ANZCCG meets biannually across different jurisdictions within Australia and New Zealand to share their learnings and discuss the promotion of children and young people's rights and advancement of their participation in mainstream systems.

On 13-14 May 2019, the ANZCCG was hosted by the PACYPC in Canberra.

³ Commission for Children and Young People Victoria, Empowerment and participation of children: Tip sheet: Child Safe Organisations. <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-empower-participation-children.pdf>

THE SURVEY

An important element of the ANZCCG agenda in May 2019 was to represent children and young people in the national arena and what better way to do this than offer them the opportunity to inform the ANZCCG members directly.

The purpose of the 'Tell us what you think' survey was to collect the views of children and young people across Australia and New Zealand on issues that were important to them.

The survey was developed through Survey Monkey and comprised seven questions, combining a series of multiple choice and free text. The questions are presented below.

Question 1: Here are some issues the Commissioners and Guardians are already working on. Which ones do you think are most important? (tick as many as you like)

- How to make things better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Making sure decision makers listen to children and young people and that you get to have a say
- How young people get treated in youth detention
- Making sure organisations keep children and young people safe
- Ending violence against children and young people
- Getting people in the community to think about what they can do to keep children and young people safe and well

Question 2: What else do you think the Commissioners and Guardians should work on to make life better for children and young people?

Question 3: This year there is going to be an election in Australia. What is one thing you want politicians to do to make Australia better for children and young people? (PS, even if you live in New Zealand, we'd love to know what you think)

Question 4: Do you feel you get to have a say in the decisions that affect you?

At home	At day-care/ school/college/uni
In the community	At work (if this is relevant to you)

Question 5: How old are you?

Under 5	15-18
5-10	18-24
11-14	

Question 6: Where do you live?

ACT	NSW
NT	QLD
SA	TAS
VIC	WA
NZ	Other

Question 7: Is there anything else you would like to tell your Commissioner or Guardian?

The survey was open from March 2019 and closed in May 2019. The survey received 488 responses and was completed by children and young people from 5-24 years old, with a small sample of children under 5 years. The completion rate was 100% and the typical time spent on completing the survey was 4 mins and 21 seconds.

NATIONAL FINDINGS

NATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES BY JURISDICTION

Of the 488 responses received, 480 participants indicating where they lived. The jurisdictional breakdown is as follows:

- ACT 75.83% (364 responses)
- NSW 9.58% (46 responses)
- NT 3.96% (19 responses)
- QLD 2.92% (14 responses)
- Tas 2.50% (12 responses)
- Vic 2.29% (11 responses)
- SA 1.25% (6 responses)
- WA 0.21% (1 response)
- NZ 0.00% (0 responses)
- Other 1.46% (7 responses)

NATIONAL AGE BREAKDOWN

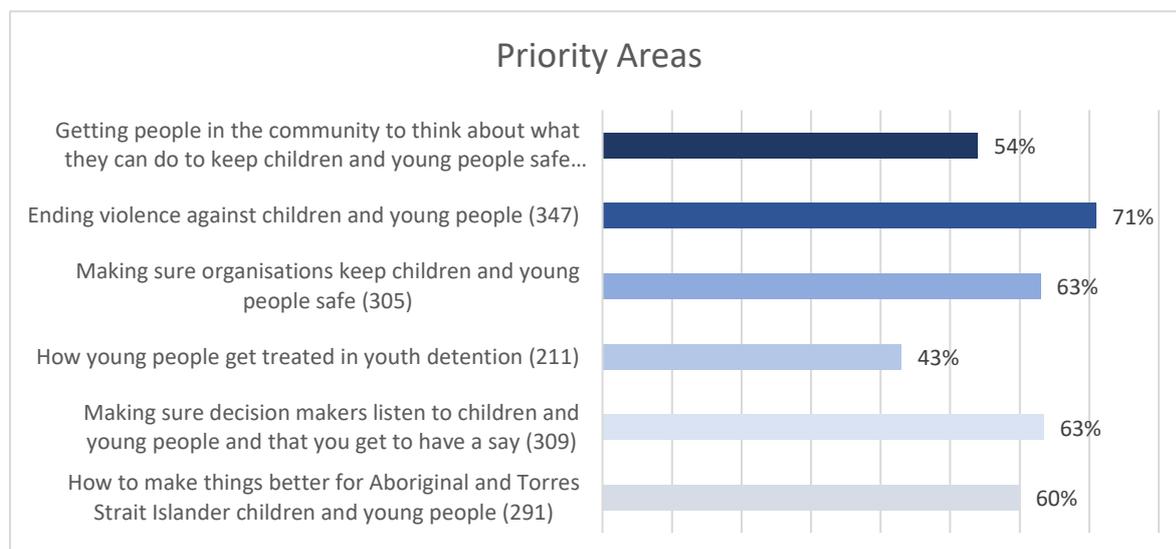
Of the 478 who indicated their age, 53.56% were aged between 11-14 years old. Ten participants skipped this question. The full national age breakdown is as follows:

- Under 5 2% (8 responses)
- 5-10 years old 11% (54 responses)
- 11-14 years old 53% (256 responses)
- 15-18 years old 25% (118 responses)
- 18-24 years old 9% (42 responses)

VIEWS ABOUT THE ANZCCG NATIONAL PRIORITIES

487 responded to the first question, which allowed them to indicate which of the existing ANZCCG priorities they considered to be most important. Respondents could select more than one priority.

The proportionate results are as follows:



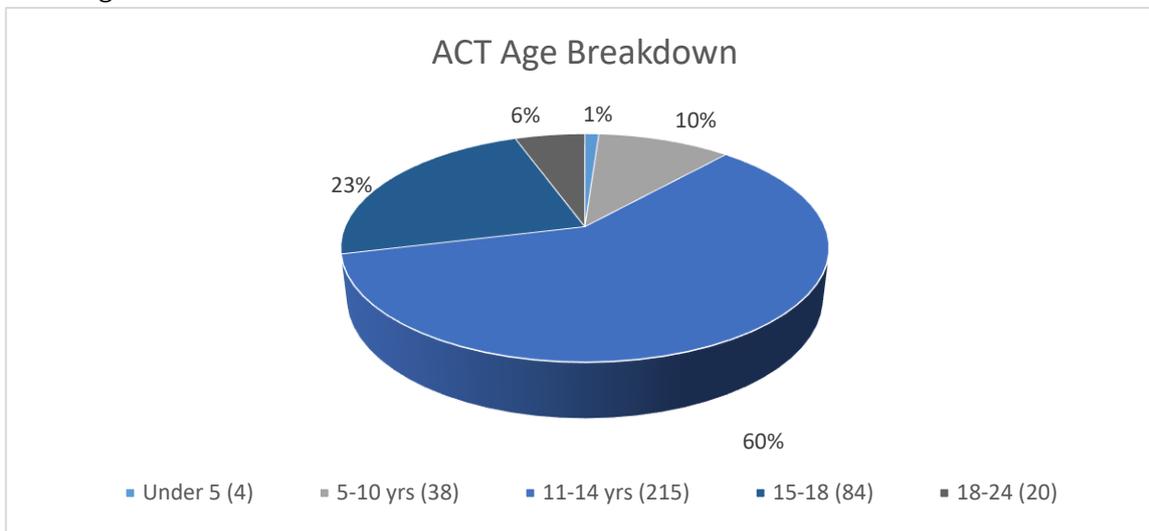
HAVING A DAY IN EVERYDAY LIFE – NATIONAL RESULTS

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they felt they got to have a say in decisions that affect them, the four domains of response being: at home; at day care/school/college/uni; in the community; and at work (if relevant). 483 respondents answered the following:

	Yes, a lot	A bit	Not much	No, not at all	not sure	Total	Weighted Average
At home?	52% (n=247)	29% (n=139)	10% (n=47)	6% (n=26)	4% (n=17)	476	3.38
At day care/ school/college/ uni?	21% (n=102)	44% (n=211)	23% (n=109)	8% (n=38)	4% (n=19)	479	2.91
In the community?	9% (n=37)	26% (n=114)	38% (n=166)	20% (n=86)	8% (n=33)	436	2.46
At work? (if this is relevant to you)	14% (n=36)	23% (n=60)	15% (n=37)	23% (n=58)	25% (n=65)	256	3.05

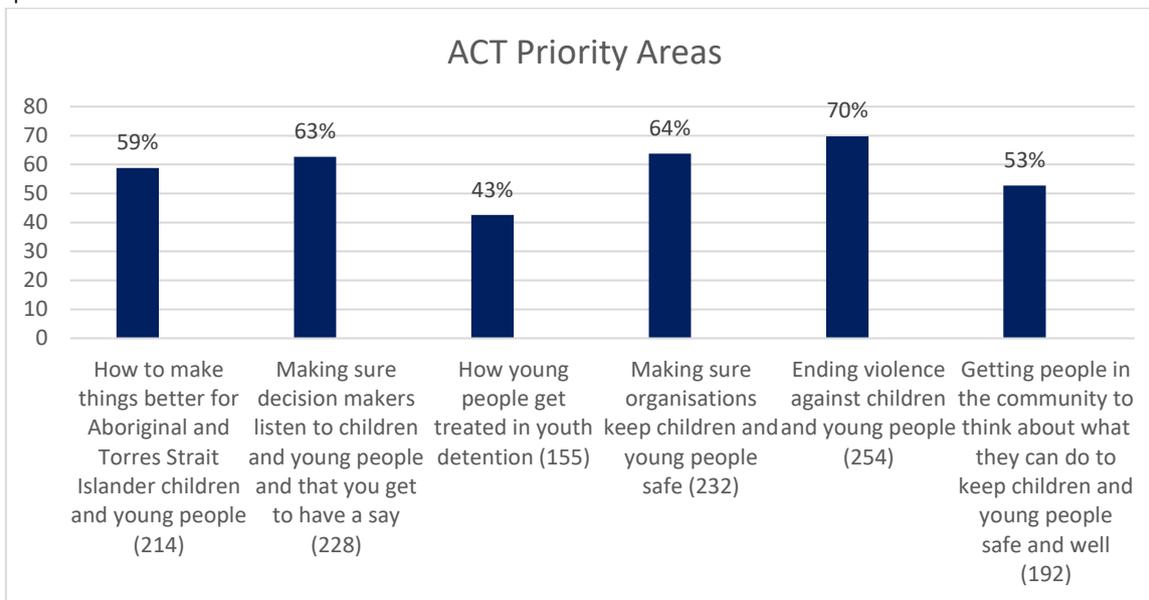
ACT AGE BREAKDOWN

Of the 361 respondents from the ACT who indicated their age, 60% (215) were aged 11-14. The full age breakdown is as follows:



ANZCCG PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

364 children and young people from the ACT responded to the first question, which allowed them to indicate which of the existing ANZCCG priorities they considered to be most important. The results are as follows:



The National and ACT priority areas responses were aligned with the only difference being that ACT children and young people indicated that making sure organisations keep children and young people safe was rated higher than making sure decision-makers listen to children and young people and that they get to have a say.

HAVING A SAY IN EVERYDAY LIFE (ACT)

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they felt they got to have a say in decisions that affect them, the four domains of response being: at home; at day care/school/college/uni; in the community; and at work (if relevant). Overall, 361 children and young people from the ACT responded to this question. The results are as follows:

	Yes, a lot	A bit	Not much	No, not at all	Not sure	Total responses	Weighted average
At home?	51% (n=182)	29% (n=104)	10% (n=37)	6% (n=20)	4% (n=13)	356	3.37
At day-care/school/college/uni?	23% (n=81)	45% (n=163)	21% (n=74)	7% (n=25)	5% (n=16)	359	2.97
In the community?	9% (n=27)	25% (n=81)	40% (n=129)	19% (n=59)	7% (n=23)	319	2.45
At work? (if relevant)	13% (n=24)	21% (n=40)	14% (n=27)	24% (n=45)	28% (n=53)	189	3.07

HAVING A SAY IN THE ACT BY AGE

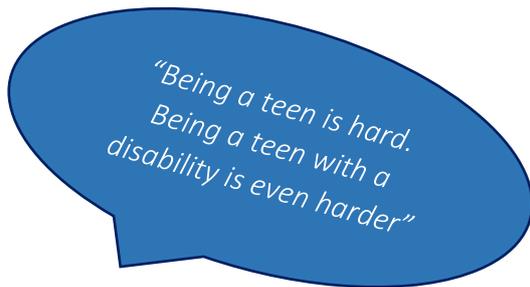
When analysing the results above and contrasting them with age, there are clear differences in respect of when children and young person feel they are able to contribute their views.

Of the participants who were under 5 years old, 50% indicated they had a lot of say while the other 50% responded none or not much. By comparison, 75% indicated they have 'a bit' of a say at school while only 25% felt they had none. Within the broader community, 66% felt they either had none or not much of a say versus 33% who felt they had 'a bit'.

In the 5-10 year old age group, 38 participants responded to the question about having a say. Home was indicated as being the place where they felt they had the most say with 79% responding either 'a lot' or 'a bit' versus 21% responding either none or unsure. School was not far behind with 73% responding with either 'a lot' or 'a bit' and only 27% responding with none, not much or not sure. This age group reported fewer positive views about having a say in the community with 75% responding with either none, not much or not sure and only 25% indicating they felt they had 'a bit' of say.



215 participants aged between 11-14 years old responded with 81% indicating they had either 'a lot' or 'a bit' of a say within the home versus 19% who felt they had none, not much or were unsure. School was similarly viewed as a place where they had the opportunity to have a say with 67% feeling they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say versus 33% who responded with none, not much or unsure. Community received a less positive rating with only 37% reporting they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of a say and 63% indicating they had none, not much or not sure. At work, only 29% of this age group reported being able to have 'a lot' or 'a bit' of a say versus 71% who reported either none, not much or not sure.⁴



*"Being a teen is hard.
Being a teen with a
disability is even harder"*



*"Children should
get more of a say in
how the community
works"*

In the 15-18 year old age group, 84 participants responded to this question. Overwhelmingly, 85% felt they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say within the home versus 15% who felt they had none, not much or not sure. School was predominantly positive with 65% of participants responding they felt they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say and 35% who felt they had none, not much or not sure. This age group felt less positive about their ability to have a say within the work environment with 21% responding either 'a lot' or 'a bit' versus 79% responding with none, not much or not sure. Similarly, 41% felt they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say within the community and 59% indicated they had none, not much or not sure.



*"Please follow through with what
gets planned. And hear the young
people out and also inform the young
people of what's going on so that
we are not left in the dark"*



*"We need healthy role
models as well as things like
safe spaces"*

⁴ Given the age group, this result may well have been skewed by the likelihood that only a small proportion would have been engaged in work.

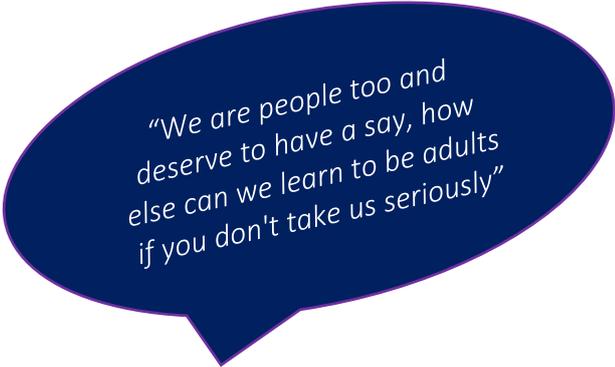


"Please let teens take on the responsibility they need, but don't expect us to be perfect, we need space to mess up so we can grow"

Of the 20 participants aged 18-24 years old, 74% reported felt they had either 'a lot' or 'a bit' of a say within the home versus 26% who responded either none, not much or not sure. Similarly, 70% felt they had 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say within the school environment and only 30% felt they had none, not much or not sure. Within the community setting, there was an even 50:50 split between having 'a bit' of a say versus not much or no say. Further, at work, 44% of this age group felt they had either 'a lot' or 'a bit' of say while 56% indicated none, not much or not sure.



"Young people also need to know their rights better"



"We are people too and deserve to have a say, how else can we learn to be adults if you don't take us seriously"

Interesting, when comparing the survey results with age and key domains for children and young people participation, the following trends are highlighted:

- Overall, home was listed as the most positive experience across all age categories. Noting, the under 5-year-old group reported the lowest level of input and observing a small decline for those in the 18-24 year old group.
- Generally, school provided opportunities for children and young people to have say, rating highest with those in the younger age groups. As the age of the child or young person increased, their experience of having a say within the school domain decreased until 18 years old when it rose again.
- Community was listed as the least positive experience for 'having a say' in all age categories, especially for those in the young age groups.
- Similarly, the work environment was reported as providing limited opportunities for expression of their views.

OPEN TEXT QUOTES FROM ACT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Creating the space and opportunity for children and young people to have free reign to indicate what the important issues affecting their lives are is central to the role of the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner.

Of the ACT respondents, 314 children and young people (86.26%) provided a response to at least one of the open-text survey questions. Only 50 ACT respondents (13.74%) did not provide any open-text response. For the ACT, the highest potential number of open-text responses that could have been provided was 1062. 776 open-text responses were received from ACT respondents.

The categories that elicited the greatest number of responses over the three (3) open-text questions were as follows:

- Education and development (129 responses – 16.62%)
- Health and wellbeing (114 responses – 14.69%)
- Giving voice to children and young people (113 responses – 14.56%)
- Safety and violence (101 responses – 13.02%)
- Climate change (62 responses – 7.99%)

A smaller number of responses related to:

- Political process (42 responses – 5.41%)
- Activities and services (33 responses – 4.25%)
- Homelessness (27 responses – 3.48%)
- Employment and economics (23 responses – 2.96%)
- Immigration/Refugees/CALD (20 responses – 2.58%)
- Bullying (20 responses – 2.58%)
- Discrimination (18 responses – 2.32%)
- LGBTIQ+ (18 responses – 2.32%)
- Transport (10 responses – 1.29%)
- Technology (6 responses – 0.77%)
- The future (6 responses – 0.77%)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (4 responses – 0.52%)
- Other (30 responses – 3.86%)

The responses on the next few pages are only some of comments provided by respondents however they provide some insight into what ACT children and young people consider to be most important to their lives.

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- ✚ *“Educating youth about practical skills e.g taxes, buying a house, how to budget.”*
- ✚ *“Making school a place we want to be instead of a place of stress and sadness. Getting teachers to think of kids as real people and treating us nicely.”*
- ✚ *“Access to high quality education and health resources for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds and/or rural communities.”*
- ✚ *“Making sure all kids can go to school and making after school activities affordable for everyone so kids can be social.”*
- ✚ *“Give all kids a fair go at education.”*
- ✚ *“Make sure they feel safe at school.”*
- ✚ *“I believe that you should work on making the schooling system better for all children from all backgrounds by supporting schools to support the families in those schools.”*
- ✚ *“School support workers (Chaplains, psychologists etc.) make them well-trained and more available (but don't make them do too much training).”*
- ✚ *“Improve learning environments, schools and the quality of teachers. Give students a community to go to after school to chill and get support for school work and mental health.”*
- ✚ *“Better education in school about different types of drugs and eating disorders.”*
- ✚ *“Education needs reform. It needs new processes and perspectives embedded into classroom learning. We need to centre education around the child and enable them to learn to their best possible capability.”*

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- ✚ *“Making it easier for me to learn even when I am sick.”*
- ✚ *“Easier access to supports for children and young people with a disability. The labyrinthine NDIS process is often confusing and complex.”*
- ✚ *“Better services in preventing child abuse, support for abortion and adoption.”*
- ✚ *“Improve access to psychology support through schools.”*
- ✚ *“Understand their body language better, if people can understand what our position means, they can help before it gets worse.”*
- ✚ *“More funding to NGOs like headspace so that more services can be included, and in particular, providing even easier access to help for mental health problems as many children and young people would want to seek help without telling their parents.”*

- ✚ *“Services for young people with disabilities and chronic illness who cannot attend school.”*
- ✚ *“Help children who are sick think about things apart from being sick.”*
- ✚ *“Being a teen is hard. Being a teen with a disability is even harder.”*
- ✚ *“I want schools, particularly high schools, to implement proper mental health services. I didn’t have one at my high school and I believe if I did have access to one things wouldn’t have gotten as bad as it did.”*
- ✚ *“Please listen to the youth as they have the answers and if we are included in decision making it will help prevent diseases that result in poor mental health & suicide.”*
- ✚ *“Increase access to mental health services for young people, not necessarily just with parental permission as many parents can be unsupportive or in denial about their children experiencing mental illnesses.”*
- ✚ *“Lessening the stigma attached to mental health and promoting awareness of not just the more common mental illnesses/disorders.”*
- ✚ *“Ensuring that the students understand how to help out their peers who are having trouble with substance abuse to other problems.”*
- ✚ *“Increase mental health care plan rebate scheme- 10 rebated sessions is not anywhere near enough.”*

GIVING VOICE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- ✚ *“Kids get a chance to be the boss.”*
- ✚ *“Letting kids get a say because it's our future and we should get a say. Also protecting us more because there is a lot of children who get treated terrible.”*
- ✚ *“Getting Everyone to respect the opinions of children and Ensuring their voices are heard.”*
- ✚ *“Acknowledge that children are people, and that it is our future world that adults are mucking up for us. Adults have made a world beyond repair and we're going to suffer, while adults go to their retirement which we will be expected to pay for.”*
- ✚ *“Let children have a say and actually start the practice of incorporating their ideas into making new laws linked to youth and child safety, child health and other aspects of children's lives.”*
- ✚ *“Maybe how we should have a site where kids put their ideas into helping our world and that gets sent to different people who will listen and see if they can apply it to our world.”*

SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

- ✚ *"Have organisations or programs to keep children & young people safe."*
- ✚ *"To make it that children in youth centres and detention are treated without violence or harassment."*
- ✚ *"Intervening in high risk families, stop leaving kids to suffer and repeat cycle of violence."*
- ✚ *"Help them feel like they are safe in the community and safe in general."*
- ✚ *"Keep kids safe - implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission and get better at information sharing to protect young people."*
- ✚ *"I think communities should create a safe place that children or young people can easily get to and the children or young people can talk to adults about there struggles."*
- ✚ *"Raise more awareness about how to stop child abuse and how to help a friend or young person who is going through abusive relationships or events."*
- ✚ *"More people for children to go when they feel like they are in trouble in public places."*
- ✚ *"Violence against the younger generation shouldn't be permitted in our world and those people who create those actions should both be fined and have time in jail."*

CLIMATE CHANGE

- ✚ *"Always keep climate change solutions in mind when working on anything. Climate change is impacting every area of the world you're leaving us."*
- ✚ *"MAKING SURE THERE IS A PLANET FOR THE YOUTH TO LIVE ON WHEN THEY ARE OLDER."*
- ✚ *"Switch to renewable energy, and make better policies for climate change. The government needs to think about the future because it is the kids of today that are going to have to live in that world."*
- ✚ *"Maybe you should think about climate change and it's affects on our futures. Because if nothing changes anytime soon we won't have a future."*
- ✚ *"Help the environment - electric cars, solar power, driverless cars."*
- ✚ *"WE NEED RENEWABLE ENERGY MORE THAN WE NEED MONEY. MONEY WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN 15 YEARS IF WE DON'T LIVE IN A HEALTHY WORLD. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, SO DO IT FOR GODS SAKE."*
- ✚ *"Stop Adani, pay attention to climate change and assign a bigger budget."*

POLITICAL PROCESS

- ✚ *"I think the government should do more to hear our voices. The school strike for climate made it clear what the next generation wants. We're definitely not staying hushed up."*
- ✚ *"Seriously consider children's voices in law-making, because they have experiences that can help our community a lot."*
- ✚ *"Greater representation of young people in politics."*
- ✚ *"Have a group of young people of all ages represent all the kids in Australia and New Zealand to talk, help make decisions and have a say in important things as we are the grown-ups in the future."*
- ✚ *"I cannot stress enough about how influential decision makers should listen to children. We are our countries future, and we should have a say because our opinions matter the most. When Scott Morrison is dead, we will still be living. Young people's opinions are the most valuable, and in reality, people in power are scared of what will happen if we get a say, because they will most likely be voted out of parliament."*
- ✚ *"I think that we should hold more events in like the Parliament of Youth program, except we can talk about our ideas for the young people in each state with people who can make these ideas happen."*
- ✚ *"Let us vote at a younger age, we need a say in society and what happens in Australia. It doesn't need to be compulsory."*

HOMELESSNESS

- ✚ *"Food to homeless people."*
- ✚ *"Somewhere for lots of people to live if they had no home."*
- ✚ *"Helping to make sure homeless children can go to school."*
- ✚ *"To have environments and more community centres that can take in children or young people who have been kicked out of their homes."*

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMICS

- ✚ *"Making sure families have money. Better paying jobs for the youth."*
- ✚ *"Taking financial burdens of working students who need to support their families."*
- ✚ *"Youth unemployment rates - and these should NOT be solved by forcing even more people into higher education when it's not suited to them."*
- ✚ *"How young people are treated in the workplace."*

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

- ✚ *“Having more facilities (especially in the ACT) to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about their own culture and having more support for children who are going through hard times as it is currently hard to have mental health facilities.”*
- ✚ *“Support children in informal kinship care. Look after the grandparents that are looking after the kids.”*
- ✚ *“Give young Australian aboriginals a better voice in government and parliament so as to improve their lives.”*
- ✚ *“More support for indigenous business Close the gap”*
- ✚ *“Be nicer to aboriginals.”*

IMMIGRATION/REFUGEES/CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

- ✚ *“Get refugee kids and their families out of detention centres.”*
- ✚ *“More aid to parents where English is their second language.”*
- ✚ *“Ending the placement of refugee children in detention camps.”*
- ✚ *“One thing that should happen in order to improve the quality of life for children would be to bridge the gap between all different types of Australians. For example, migrant/asylum seekers and their children. Punishing a child for deeds that they had nothing to do with is wrong and it would be a great change to promote a healthier image of kids coming from difficult situations.”*
- ✚ *“I think we should be much, much, much more kinder to refugees and asylum seekers, and protect Muslim youth from Islamophobia and racism.”*

DISCRIMINATION

- ✚ *“Making sure that children are treated fairly, i.e. making sure that children are treated with just as much respect as adults.”*
- ✚ *“Making sure that some Christian and Catholic schools don't discriminate gay, lesbian or transgender students.”*
- ✚ *“Everyone is equal.”*
- ✚ *“Raising awareness about injustices that have/are/might occur,”*
- ✚ *“I would like a program outside of school which is for people all around Canberra and is government run where we can show our ideas and do awareness events to raise awareness against discrimination and abuse against children.”*

LGBTIQ+

- ✚ *"Help protect and include the lgbtq+ community."*
- ✚ *"Safety for homeless and lgbt youth."*
- ✚ *"Making sure LGBTIQ kids get the support they need."*
- ✚ *"Awareness of and Safety for LGBT and homeless youth and youth struggling with mental illnesses."*

BULLYING

- ✚ *"Work on violence and bullying in schools."*
- ✚ *"More things to do with bullying. A.K.A More people to talk to. More Awareness"*
- ✚ *"Preventing violence more or bullying."*
- ✚ *"Stop bullying and fights. E.g. Physical Fights, Cyberbullying and Verbal Bullying."*
- ✚ *"Making sure there's less bullying and that the children say what they believe and don't hide it away because of what others think of it."*
- ✚ *"To have more cyber bully police people come into the schools to remind everyone what they may be in for."*

TRANSPORT

- ✚ *"Improving public transport, improve supports for disadvantaged children, improve facilities for children with special needs."*
- ✚ *"Less fees and cheaper transport for young people so it is easy for kids to focus on school."*
- ✚ *"A better transport system for students to get to school faster."*

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

- ✚ *"Events for young people to feel part of the wider community."*
- ✚ *"More youth centres."*
- ✚ *"Sport is a big part of kids lives. Make it better for us."*

TECHNOLOGY

- ✚ *"More security on online websites. More solutions to bullying"*

THE FUTURE

- ✚ *“To try and understand the changing times and be understanding that we are growing up in a different generation.”*
- ✚ *“Let their voice be heard because they are the future of this country.”*
- ✚ *“The youth are the future and what they think is important, no matter their age”*
- ✚ *“I think Australia is a great place. But if we ever want to make it greater, we need a more open and involved government. We must fight climate change. We must end discrimination. We must be a good ally to our worldwide community. Thank YOU, Commissioners, for giving us a chance to speak up.”*
- ✚ *“I'm worried about the future and what it will be like. I hope we can make meaningful change and that our society will be safe and healthy and the future will be ok. Because as it stands we haven't much faith in our government, and a lot of youth feel lost, bombarded by news and social media and we find it hard to voice our concerns and know they are listened to and taken action on. Health services, our environment, our wildlife, school, money, social life are all worries. Thanks for reading.”*

USING THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM CHANGE

In recent years, recognition has increasingly been given to the value of participation by children and young people. But while many have already reached this realisation, there are others who still believe that children should be neither seen nor heard.

We must generate a shared understanding about the fact that empowering and supporting children and young people to share their views and contribute to decision-making about important issues that impact their lives will have positive effects on the broader Australian community.

As with adults, a child or a young person has the right to participate in all aspects of social life. Further, participation assists to build capacity and enables the development of key relationships that are essential for development into adulthood.

The PACYPC strongly advocates for systems that enable children to be safe and feel safe. Ensuring children and young people can be seen and heard is an important protective element within families, organisations, systems and community. Put simply, it can save lives!

The PACYPC will continue to prioritise its work on direct participation and consultation with children and young people, recognising that they are an essential source of information and feedback to inform the work we do. As this survey demonstrates, children and young people think deeply about a broad range of societal issues and can make invaluable contributions to the community if they are empowered to do so.

As members of their community, we have a responsibility to listen.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The PACYPC acknowledges that children and young people are key stakeholders in our community and within the service systems they access in their daily lives. This survey enabled the PACYPC to obtain a snapshot of the things that ACT children and young people are thinking about.

The PACYPC firmly believes that purposeful participation is only achievable when systems understand that children and young people are experts in their own lives. Every child and young person has the right to express their opinion and be given the opportunity to provide advice and valuable insight into how their rights can best be fulfilled. Ideally, those insights will lead to child-safe and child-friendly organisations and systems.

The survey findings should remind governments, policy-makers and the community about how valuable the input of children and young people can be. They serve to remind us all of the contribution that children and young people provide for contemporary society – and for their future!

As always, the PACYPC continues to look for opportunities to bring attention to the issues identified by children and young people as being important. This work has already commenced – it will continue.

The PACYPC would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants for their contribution, with a special acknowledgement to those children and young people in the ACT who took the time to respond to the survey. It is inspiring to hear directly from children and young people and it keeps the PACYPC grounded in what is important for this generation and the work we have yet to accomplish.



**ACT HUMAN RIGHTS
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