

# Child and Youth Impact Assessment Tool

Considering children and young people in decision-making



Valuing Children

— INITIATIVE —

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## About the VCI

The Valuing Children Initiative works to ensure that all children in Australia experience the caring, safe, and supported childhood they deserve.

The fact that we continue to see poor outcomes for children in so many different areas is not because it's impossible to do better or because we don't recognise that children have rights. In the simplest of terms, the reason we continue to see such outcomes is because children are just not a high enough priority.

Established in 2016, the Valuing Children Initiative recognises the significant contribution that children and young people make to our society in the here and now. Children bind families and communities together. They bring laughter and love into our lives. They remind us of the importance of play, to be curious, to notice life's small details, to be creative, spontaneous, and honest, to value relationships and to appreciate the natural world. Children are innovative and optimistic. Their endless energy and enthusiasm gives us hope for the future.

The Valuing Children Initiative seeks to shift individual and collective attitudes so that it is ordinary and commonplace for adults to recognise and acknowledge the value of children. If more adults value the contribution of children then more adults will advocate for children so it's an important precursor to improved outcomes for kids.

## Acknowledgement of country

The Valuing Children Initiative acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of this country and its waters, particularly the Whadjuk people whose boodja we live and work on.

We wish to pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and extend to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders seeing this message.

The Valuing Children Initiative wishes to acknowledge the rights of all koolankas (children) and endorse the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child.

We want to say to all children, everywhere, that you matter, and you are valued Aboriginal people.



Photo of Indigo Ellis -  
Ambassador for VCI

Photo Credit : Sara Terry

# The Opportunity

Every day, adults make decisions, pass laws and deliver services. Some of the decisions and laws can have a direct impact on the lives of children and young people, some are indirect. Either way, the views of children and young people are often not considered, and their voices are generally not heard.

A Child and Youth Impact Assessment Tool (CYIAT) is a voluntary process that enables governments and organisations to identify, analyse and assess the impacts of any proposed law or policy on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. While it might take longer, the results benefit everyone in the community.

## What is a Child and Youth Impact Assessment Tool?

CYIATs are similar to environmental impact assessment in that they provide a step-by-step process for policymakers to systematically consider the effects of a proposed policy on children and young people to incorporate the results into their decision-making.

This includes a requirement to obtain the views of children and young people. Impacts identified in CYIATs can be direct or indirect, short, medium or long term, positive, negative or neutral.

CYIATs are successful when they consider whether a proposal may impact a group of children and young people more than the general population based on age, gender, abilities, location, cultural background and if they are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

**Embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) General Comment No. 14, para 99, CYIATs will:**

- See children as active rights holders rather than passive recipients of adult actions;
- Predict the impact of proposed policy, legislation, regulation, budget or other administrative decisions on children and the enjoyment of their rights;
- Track with ongoing monitoring and evaluation the impact of the measures on child rights;
- Be built into Government processes at all levels as early as possible and on a continuing basis in the development of policy and other general measures for good governance of child rights;
- Maximize positive impacts and avoid or mitigate negative impacts on child rights and well-being (CRC, General Comment No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (GC No. 14), para 35)

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## Who should undertake a child and youth impact assessment?

All government departments, service providers and private sector organisations should assess the impact of proposed laws, policies, projects and their programs on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. Schools, local governments and any child based organisation must always ask children their views and incorporate their feedback.

Children have told us that is important for them to feel valued. Many children said they felt valued by their parents, siblings and friends but less so by their teachers and the school principal.

Curtin University's A Child's Voice research report recommended the school leadership and school community to consider in their future planning, learning, teaching, assessment, and relationship-building:

- Making student voices and views visible and embedded at all levels, and an integral part of the schools' strategic direction.
- Ensuring play has a strong emphasis within the whole-school culture, inclusive of all students and extended to the staff cohort.
- Creating, sustaining, and communicating methods of support for all children of different ages, needs, and identities throughout the school.
- Designing projects in partnership with students aimed at connecting with their community, and facilitate their safe participation in enacting change.

## Why?

Children and young people feel valued when we consider them and ask their opinions. Conversely they don't feel valued when they are ignored.

Did you know that there is no requirement for policymakers to consider how policies will impact children, either now or in the future? There is also no requirement to ask children and young people what they think about important issues.

Children aged 0-14 years represent 18.7% of the Australian community. Children and young people are key stakeholders, and we believe their needs, views and interests should be duly considered by decision makers.

Children and young people are directly impacted by policy decisions in education, child protection, health, justice, climate change, disability, social housing, childcare, migration, urban planning, and regional development. Sometimes the impact on children is indirect but no less important.



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# Around the world

## Unicef

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child all levels of government and anyone delivering public services (including from the voluntary or private sectors) must ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

## Canadian Law

CYIATs are relatively new in Canada but have been used by all levels of government and in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia with initiatives underway in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and the Yukon.

## New Zealand Child Impact Assessment Tool

A Child Impact Assessment (CIA) Tool has been developed to help government and non-government organisations in New Zealand to assess whether policy proposals will improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

## United States of America Case studies of the Uses of Child/Youth Impact Assessment

### A Case of Clark County (Nevada) Anti-Discrimination in Housing Policy

In 2020, the Clark County Nevada government proposed a policy to protect renters from discrimination due to financial hardships during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Child/Youth Impact Assessment was used to prevent child homelessness, help families have stable housing, and provide options to move to higher-opportunity neighbourhoods. The assessment addressed prohibiting discrimination of voucher recipients based on their source of income, as well as the importance of clear messaging on prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQIA+ renters (children and youth and those with LGBTQIA+ family members), and the potential to move to higher-opportunity neighbourhoods to reach better access of parents' employment opportunities and child services.

### The Martial Cottle Park Master Plan in Santa Clara

Child impact was assessed on a Master Plan for the construction and opening of the Martial Cottle Park. Scheduled to open in the Summer of 2014, the Schematic Design Phase considered children's impact in the area of healthy lifestyle indicators. The park would be developed to showcase the agricultural heritage of Santa Clara, thus promoting sustainable farming traditions. The demonstrative program was prepared for the youth and children to expose them to agricultural practices, healthy food and healthy eating.

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## **Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth: Child Impact Statement for Defending Childhood Initiative**

The Defending Childhood Initiative, established in 2010, significantly impacted children. With the objective to improve program services regarding children’s exposure to violence by taking a “no wrong door approach”, the program designed a culturally-competent system by coordinating community response to childhood exposure to violence. Building on existing collaborations and infrastructures to establish a Project Safe Future Council, the program enhanced the public policy, services and funding affecting many domains of child wellbeing.

## **Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill 2021**

Aiming to reduce emissions from heating homes and buildings, the bill persuaded the deployment of heat networks in Scotland. The proposal was reviewed and analysed to determine whether it was against the Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the child wellbeing indicators under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The assessment concluded that the bill does not directly impact any specific child wellbeing indicators. However, it does have indirect positive effects on children. For instance, the resilience of heat networks positively influences child health by providing warm homes and generating low-carbon heat. Moreover, children living in poverty can benefit from the program as it reduces heating costs.



# Assessment template

## Initial screening stage

### 1 Description of proposal.

Include the title, purpose, expected outcomes of the proposal and responsible agency/organisation.

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### 2 Does this proposal directly impact on children and young people?

Yes

No

Children and young people will be directly impacted by a proposal if the proposal is explicitly targeted at them.

### 3 Does this proposal have an indirect impact on children and young people?

Yes

No

Indirect impacts may result from intended flow-on effects or unintended consequences of a proposal. Proposals that directly impact parents and families, access to services, community resources or recreational activities, are likely to indirectly impact children and young people.

If you answered **No** to both of the above, there is no need to proceed any further.



# Assessment stage

**4** Think about the purpose, expected outcomes, flow-on effects and unintended consequences of the proposal. How will they directly or indirectly impact the safety, learning, health and/or wellbeing of children and young people? The views of children and young people, parents, carers, service providers and other relevant stakeholders should be considered when making this assessment.

**Positive impacts of the proposal on children and young people.**

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**5** Negative impacts of the proposal on children and young people.

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**6** Are there any particular groups of children and young people who are likely to be more greatly impacted by the proposal compared to children and young people in general? List these groups, and outline the evidence you have used to inform this assessment.

For example First Nations, CALD, age, distance, ability, LGBTQIA+ individuals, vulnerable, disadvantaged, living in rural areas, youth in foster care etc.

**If so, how?**

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**7** Take the time now to consider and list ways to minimise harm to children and young people.

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Consider the answers you have provided above. How would you assess the significance of the proposal's impact on children and young people?

Trivial or Inconsequential

Minor

Moderate

Major

Explain why you have assessed the proposal as having the level of impact.

The significance of the impact a proposal has on children and young people will be influenced by a range of factors. Relevant factors include the number of children and young people affected, whether an affected group of children and young people are disadvantaged or vulnerable in some way, the ability of affected children and young people to cope with the impact, and the length of time the impact will be likely to last.

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Consider whether the proposal is in the best interests of children and young people.

Where decisions made or actions taken may impact children and young people, their best interests must always be prioritised.

If your proposal deals exclusively with the wellbeing of children and young people, their best interests should be the paramount consideration. If your proposal does not deal exclusively with the wellbeing of children and young people, their best interests should be a primary consideration.

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**10** Outline measures that will be implemented to address any negative impacts the proposal will have on children and young people in general, or the groups of children and young people you have identified. If no measures will be implemented, record the reasons for this decision.

Mitigation strategies should be balanced against the significance of the negative impact and the likelihood of the negative impact; they should be practical and implementable.

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**11** Outline any other evidence that you need to collect regarding children and young people in order to successfully complete the design and implementation of this proposal.

Undertaking a child impact assessment may identify knowledge gaps that could effect the successful delivery of a proposal. As part of a comprehensive evaluation, relevant information should be collected throughout the assessment process by:

- undertaking research, including desk-based inquiry to build evidence base
- consulting with children and young people and stakeholders
- using the resources including in these guidelines and on the Commissioner for Children and Young People's website.

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## Final recommendation stage

A final recommendation regarding the proposal is made.

The recommendation should be informed by these guidelines.

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Notes

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of multiple horizontal lines.



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Contact us about your  
Child and Youth Impact Assessment Tool

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