

EVERY CHILD IS VALUABLE



Their future is in our hands



Valuing Children  
— INITIATIVE —



**"If we don't stand up for  
children, then we don't  
stand for much."**

- Marian Wright Edelman

# THE VALUING CHILDREN INITIATIVE

## Who are we?

At the Valuing Children Initiative we believe every child deserves a happy, healthy and safe childhood. We recognise that children have no choice about the circumstances of their birth, or their childhood, and consider the wellbeing of children to be everyone's responsibility. We know that childhood experiences shape adulthood so it's important we nurture, protect and listen to our youngest citizens.

The Valuing Children Initiative views children as important members of our society who, like all members of society, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We work to create a culture in which it becomes automatic for the needs and wellbeing of children to be prioritised and where it is standard practice for kids to be actively involved in decision-making.

We recognise 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 to be playful, curious, mindful, creative, spontaneous and honest; to appreciate the natural world and to value relationships. Children are innovative and optimistic. Their endless energy and enthusiasm gives us hope for the future.

Australia is a wealthy country with the capacity to ensure all children are given the supports and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. However, outcomes for Australian children are unacceptably poor across a number of domains.

Babies, children and young people rely on adults to care about their wellbeing. The Valuing Children Initiative invites you to advocate with and for kids to ensure they are valued, prioritised, and heard.

The Valuing Children Initiative acknowledges and gives respect to all Traditional Custodians across this vast nation, their Elders past and present. We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society. We commit to supporting the youth of today, who will be the Elders of tomorrow.

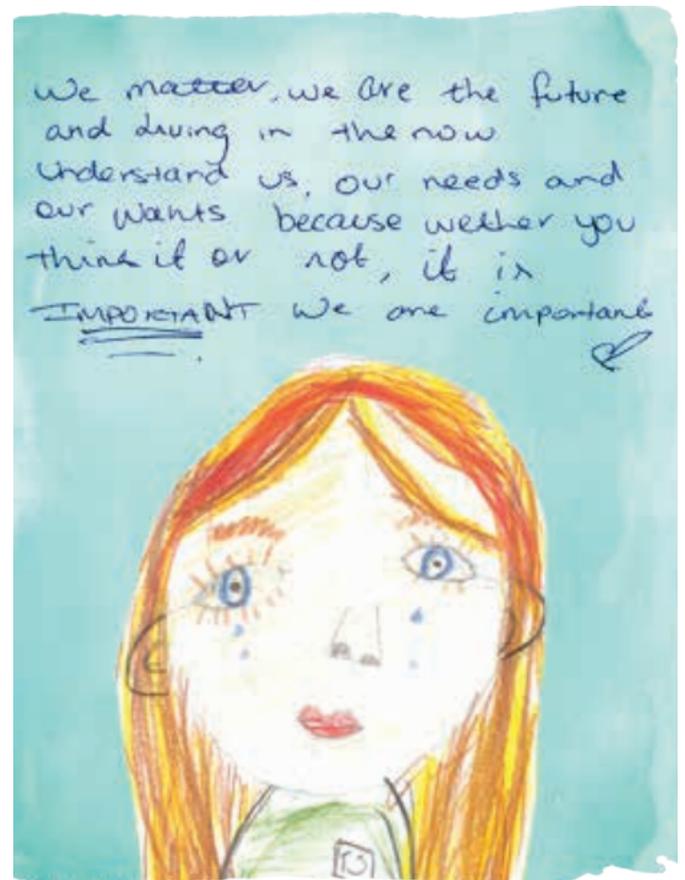


Image credit: 'The Children's Report' (2019).

# HOW ARE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN FARING?

Far too many children are falling through the cracks. There are solutions and we can do better. All 4.7 million of Australia's children are valuable and deserve the best start to life.



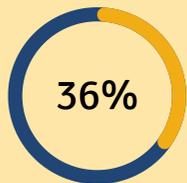
Every 69 seconds a young person contacts Kids Helpline



One in six Australian children aged 0-14 years lived in poverty in 2017-18

## 53%

Of all children under youth justice supervision were also in the child protection system



Of children reach the age of 15 without basic reading or mathematics skills.

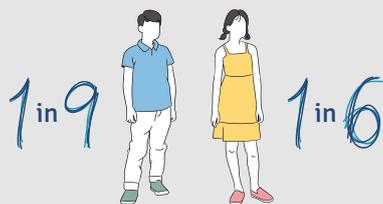


80 per cent of children exiting out-of-home care do not complete their high school certificate



Australian children are overweight

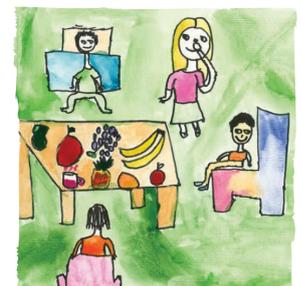
Only 2.5 per cent of children aged 5-14 eat enough fruit and veg



Australian children experience sexual abuse before 15 years old

## 174000

Children received child protection services in 2019-20



## 1 in 2

Children living in the most disadvantaged areas are developmentally vulnerable in at least **two domains**



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are **10.9 times** more likely to enter out-of-home care and **26 times** more likely to enter youth detention



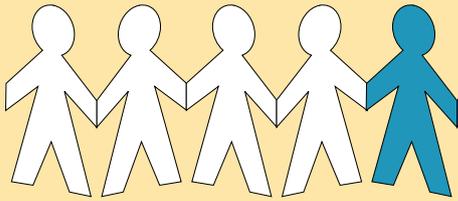
Over **50 per cent** of same sex attracted or gender diverse children have experienced verbal abuse and over **15 per cent** have experienced physical abuse



# 1 in 4

Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students reported being bullied every few weeks or more often

**1 in 5 children** aged 15-19 are extremely or very worried about family conflict



# 194000

Children aged 0-14 years were homeless at the last census



An estimated **eight** children are sexually assaulted by a family member every day

# 52%

Of girls and **25 per cent** of boys aged 15-19 are highly concerned about body image

Australia has the **5th highest OECD suicide rate** for young people aged 15-19 years



Children aged 8-12 have experienced unwanted contact and content while online

**One in seven** children/young people experience mental health issues



**20%** Of children are not school-ready when they start their education and many will never catch up



Nearly **half** of children between 9-16 experience regular online exposure to sexual images

**One in ten** young people aged 12 to 17 years have engaged in self-harm



# WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR?

## 1. GREATER PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS, WELLBEING & CONTRIBUTIONS

**Why?** Children are important, contributing members of society but we often overlook the contributions they make and fail to prioritise their needs and wellbeing. Children rely on adults to give them the best start in life. We are all responsible for child wellbeing and we can all contribute to better outcomes for children. Increased public awareness of children's needs, issues and wellbeing is fundamental to change.

**Current status:** Ongoing. Like many other organisations the Valuing Children Initiative is working hard to achieve better outcomes for Australian kids but poor child wellbeing statistics tell us that kids are a relatively low priority in our society.

**How you can help:** Help us to raise awareness by sharing this [campaign](#) document far and wide. Follow us on social media and encourage others to follow us too. Sign up to our newsletter to stay up to date. We love sharing positive stories about children and young people. If you know of an extraordinary child or young person making a positive difference (or you are one!) we'd love to hear from you.

## 2. MINISTER FOR CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

**In every Australian state, territory and federally, a Minister for Children's Interests (Cabinet position)**

**Why?** Ministerial portfolios and the relative seniority of ministers reflect government and community priorities. Therefore the appointment of Ministers for Children's Interests in all states, territories, and federally, sends a signal by governments to the broader community that the needs and wellbeing of children and young people are important. Government policies directly affect children and young people and it is essential that their voices and needs are represented at all levels of government. Children's interests are broader than child protection and education; a Minister for Children's Interests would ensure consideration to children is given across the whole of government.

**Current status:** Partially achieved. Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have Ministers for Children and Youth. Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory each have a Minister for Youth (but not children). At the federal level there is an Assistant Minister for Children and Families (not a Cabinet position). Whilst some jurisdictions have a Minister for Children and Youth the portfolio responsibilities of these ministers varies and typically they are limited to specific areas. Overall, children's issues, views and interests are not adequately represented.

**How you can help:** Send an email to local and federal politicians calling for the appointment of a Minister for Children's Interests in all Australian jurisdictions. Write your own or use our handy online template. We'll even send it for you!

**Send an email:** [valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/Every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/](mailto:valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/Every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/)

### 3. CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING STRATEGY AND BUDGET

**Implementation of a whole of government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and budget. This is required at the national level and in each Australian state and territory.**

**Why?** We want Australia to be a place where all children and young people are happy, healthy, safe, and supported to reach their full potential, but we are failing to provide this for many children. For example, 774,000 children live in poverty in Australia; we know that growing up in poverty negatively impacts kids. Fixing this problem is both essential and urgent. There are many societal issues impacting children- poverty is just one of them. At a macro level there is a lack of vision for Australian children. We don't have aspirational goals for our children or consistent ways of measuring progress. A whole of government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, with appropriate budget support, sets out a shared understanding of what's important for child and youth wellbeing, what government is doing, and how others can help. It's a unifying framework that includes aspirational targets for Australian children and articulates what children and young people want and need for a good life. A Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy clearly outlines wellbeing outcomes and shows how progress will be measured and reported on so that we can all see the difference being made and where more work might be needed. Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategies should be developed following widespread stakeholder engagement by independent experts. This includes asking kids what they want for themselves and for future generations.

**Current status:** Not achieved. Experts have called upon the Federal Government to introduce a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and budget for many years to no avail. Most Australian states and territories do not have a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the exception being Tasmania which introduced a budgeted, whole of government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy in August 2021. Other states and territories have strategies and plans relating to areas that impact children and young people like education and health, or for children in specific age groups, but they do not have budgeted, whole of government strategies for all children and young people.

**How to help:** Write to local and federal politicians to let them know that the introduction of Child Wellbeing Strategies is crucial if we are to achieve better outcomes for children. Write your own letter or use our online template [valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/](https://valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/). Support existing social change campaigns that advocate for children and their families. Check out: [Raise The Rate Everybody's Home](#) [Every Child Anti-Poverty Week](#) [Raise The Age Family Matters](#) [SNAICC - National Voice for our Children](#) [Every School Every Child Thrive By Five](#) [Headspace campaigns](#). Empowering children and young people to advocate for themselves is also key.

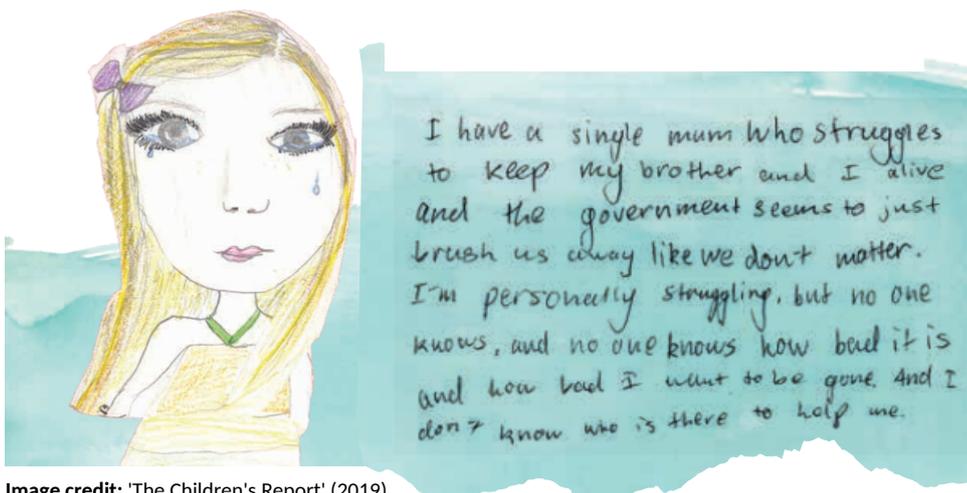


Image credit: 'The Children's Report' (2019).

## 4. CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

### Develop and implement a standardised and mandatory Child Impact Assessment tool that is supported in state and federal legislation

**Why?** A Child Impact Assessment (CIA) tool 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. The process includes a requirement to obtain the views of children when developing policy and legislation. Impacts identified in a CIA can be direct or indirect; short, medium or long-term; and positive, negative or neutral. For CIA's to be effective, a clear, mandatory and standardised CIA process would need to be supported by state and federal legislation. It's worth noting we do this in other areas. Much like environmental, social and fiscal impact assessments, CIA's provide a step-by-step process for policymakers to systematically consider the effects of a proposed policy on children and incorporate the results into their decision-making.

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and by signing this treaty we made a clear commitment to children; CIA's can be used to help ensure Australia is meeting its obligations to children in accordance with the UNCRC. There are many countries already using CIA's in one form or another (Scotland, New Zealand, Sweden, Wales, Canada, Belgium, Austria, Finland) including to assist governments in these countries to ensure they are meeting UNCRC obligations.

**Current status:** Not achieved. Adults make decisions and implement policies that impact children all the time but there is no requirement to consider how decisions will impact children - now or in the future- or to ask kids what they think! While examples of CIA's exist, in Australia there is no accepted standard or legislative framework in place to support the use of CIA's.

**How you can help:** Sign our online petition calling for the introduction of mandatory and standardised Child Impact Assessments. It's important to teach children about their rights under the UNCRC and about CIA's; what they are and how to advocate for their use in Australia. Whilst a standard and mandatory process is preferable, governments and organisations don't need to wait for CIA's to become mandatory- they can start using CIA's right now. A community of practice for CIA's (also known as Child Rights Impact Assessments) exists. Head to [criacommunity.org](http://criacommunity.org) for free resources, templates and information.

**Sign the petition:** [valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/child-impact-assessments/signthepetition](http://valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/child-impact-assessments/signthepetition)



**"We should value children by making them feel included, not like a ghost."**

**- Year 5 student**



# VALUING CHILDREN AMBASSADORS

Every child is valuable



**COLIN PETTIT**

Former Commissioner For  
Children and Young People WA



**DR GLENDA KICKETT**

Australian Childhood  
Foundation, cultural advocate



**BELLA BURGEMEISTER**

Youth Advocate, Author &  
Presenter



**CLAIRE ORANGE**

Author, speaker, Director of BEST  
Programs 4 Kids & DiGii Social

—  
**Together we  
can build a  
society that  
truly values all  
children**  
—



**ADJ. PROF. ANITA GHOSE**

Partner, Deloitte



**DR SUE PACKER AM**

Community Paediatrician and Senior  
Australian of the Year 2019



**DR SANDY CHONG**

President, United Nations  
Association of Australia (WA)



**DR BRIAN BABINGTON AM**

Former CEO, Families Australia

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Their future is in our hands**

**SIGN:** Our petition advocating for the introduction of mandatory Child Impact Assessments or send an email to your local politician calling for Ministers for Children's Interests and Child Wellbeing Strategies.

**Petition:** [valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/child-impact-assessments/signthepetition/](https://valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/child-impact-assessments/signthepetition/)

**Email a politician:** [valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/Every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/](https://valuingchildreninitiative.good.do/Every-child-is-valuable/emailforchange/)

**SHARE:** Raising awareness is key to driving change and you can help us do this! Download this [campaign](#) document and a range of FREE resources for children, parents and teachers from our website. [valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](https://valuingchildreninitiative.com.au) Register for our [newsletter](#) to stay up to date with our work.

**FOLLOW:** We'd love you to **like** and **share** our posts on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

**PARTNER:** If you'd like to partner with us get in touch! Previous & current partnerships include; *Perth Heat Baseball Club, The Lester Prize, Tony Fini Foundation, Deloitte, The McCusker Centre for Citizenship, ChildSafe Australia, St Benedict's School, Guildford Grammar, Propel Youth Arts, University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, City of Belmont, City of Cockburn* and many more.

**EVENTS:** We organise and participate in a number of events throughout the year. Events are lots of fun and a great way of raising awareness. Past events include Valuing Children Days at Perth Heat, roundtable discussions, book readings, family fun days and a hip-hop lyric writing workshop for teenagers! If you are holding an event and would like us to attend please get in touch. We are always happy to support community events related to child wellbeing.

**PURCHASE:** Our children's books are loved by children and adults alike. Only \$38 for a set of four [books](#). Money raised helps us to continue our important work. We also offer discounted books to schools, playgroups and other groups for fundraising!

**DONATE:** When we put children first the whole community benefits. Consider donating to the Valuing Children Initiative because Australian children need your help. Whether you can afford a little or a lot, every bit helps. We have fundraising ideas for schools and workplaces too! Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

**CONTACT US:** Questions? We regularly provide information to schools, journalists, service providers and others interested in our work. If you are a child or young person who would like to get involved, we would love to hear from you! Email [info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](mailto:info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)



[valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](http://valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)

[info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au](mailto:info@valuingchildreninitiative.com.au)



#valuingchildren

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