



**MEDIA RELEASE March 29, 2022**

## **Federal election priorities for a government that puts Australia's children first**

The Valuing Children Initiative (VCI) has today released its Federal Election Priorities, calling on the support of all candidates to ensure children are at the heart of public policy this coming election.

In Australia, almost 18 per cent of kids live below the poverty line. One in four is overweight and an estimated eight children are sexually assaulted by a family member every day.

We also know that one in seven Australian children experience mental health issues and that 36 percent of children reach the age of 15 without basic reading or mathematics skills.

VCI Development Executive Maddie McLeod said the Federal election comes at a crucial moment in time and Australia must act urgently to ensure children are prioritised and protected.

"It's fair to say that these are unprecedented times. In recent months and years, we've seen catastrophic floods and fires, navigated our way through a global pandemic and lately our news is filled with images of war in Ukraine," Ms McLeod said.

"These things have occurred alongside longstanding issues of inequality in Australia and in the context of accelerating climate change. Adults are struggling to make sense of all of this; imagine what it's like for children in 2022.

"In an increasingly complex world, the importance of good government and government policy is clear.

"As citizens who cannot vote children rely on adults to advocate for them. This should include strong advocacy by the Federal Government."

The VCI has written to Members of Parliament and candidates calling for the next government of Australia to support these national priorities:

1. Children's needs, views and wellbeing are represented and prioritised by government
2. A reasonable standard of living for all Australian children and their families
3. Aspirational targets for Australian children
4. Action on climate change

VCI Founder Adj. Prof. Tony Pietropiccolo AM endorsed the priorities, noting that children aged 0-14 make up close to 20 per cent of the Australian population.

"Children have no choice about the circumstances of their birth, or their childhood; they rely on adults to provide them with the opportunities and supports they need to flourish," Mr Pietropiccolo said.

"Across the world, governments and communities are looking at new ways to ensure children and future generations' needs and interests are explicitly considered, notwithstanding their lack of political or economic influence.

“We must follow suit and advocate for, and alongside, children and young people to ensure their views, interests and needs are adequately represented in the Australian Parliament”

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## **About the Valuing Children Initiative**

The Valuing Children Initiative (VCI) was established in 2016 to inspire Australians to value all children, promote understanding that children’s wellbeing is a shared responsibility of the entire community, and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations.

VCI’s vision is the creation of a society in which all children in Australia experience the caring, safe, and supported childhood they deserve. VCI recognises the important contributions children make to our society in the here and now and advocates to ensure children are treated with dignity and respect. This includes ensuring children and young people are provided with meaningful opportunities to express their views and opinions.