

Young and Wise

Insights from Children and Young
People on Thriving in Australia
2018-2023



every child thriving
aracy



Acknowledgement of Country

ARACY acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we work. We pay respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ARACY treasures the rich and diverse cultures and customs of First Nations people - valued knowledge holders, leaders and partners in creating the conditions for all our children to thrive.



About ARACY

ARACY's purpose is clear: to champion all Australian children and young people to thrive. As their needs grow and change, so too must the support systems surrounding them. We back good practices and best policies to prevent disease and provide the best conditions for their holistic health.

Our team stands at the frontline of this mission, bringing together the latest evidence, practitioners and policymakers to develop child-centered strategies that make a real difference.

Learn more at www.aracy.org.au

Forward



We believe all children and young people should have the opportunity to thrive.

ARACY exists to ensure all children and young people in Australia thrive. Based on what children, young people, their families, and experts have told us this means feeling valued, loved, and safe; having their basic material needs met; having the opportunity to learn and participate; being healthy; and having a positive sense of identity and culture.

This publication aims to shine a light on some of the valuable insights children and young people have already shared with us. It is by no means a comprehensive representation of all the avenues where children and young people can be supported to thrive.

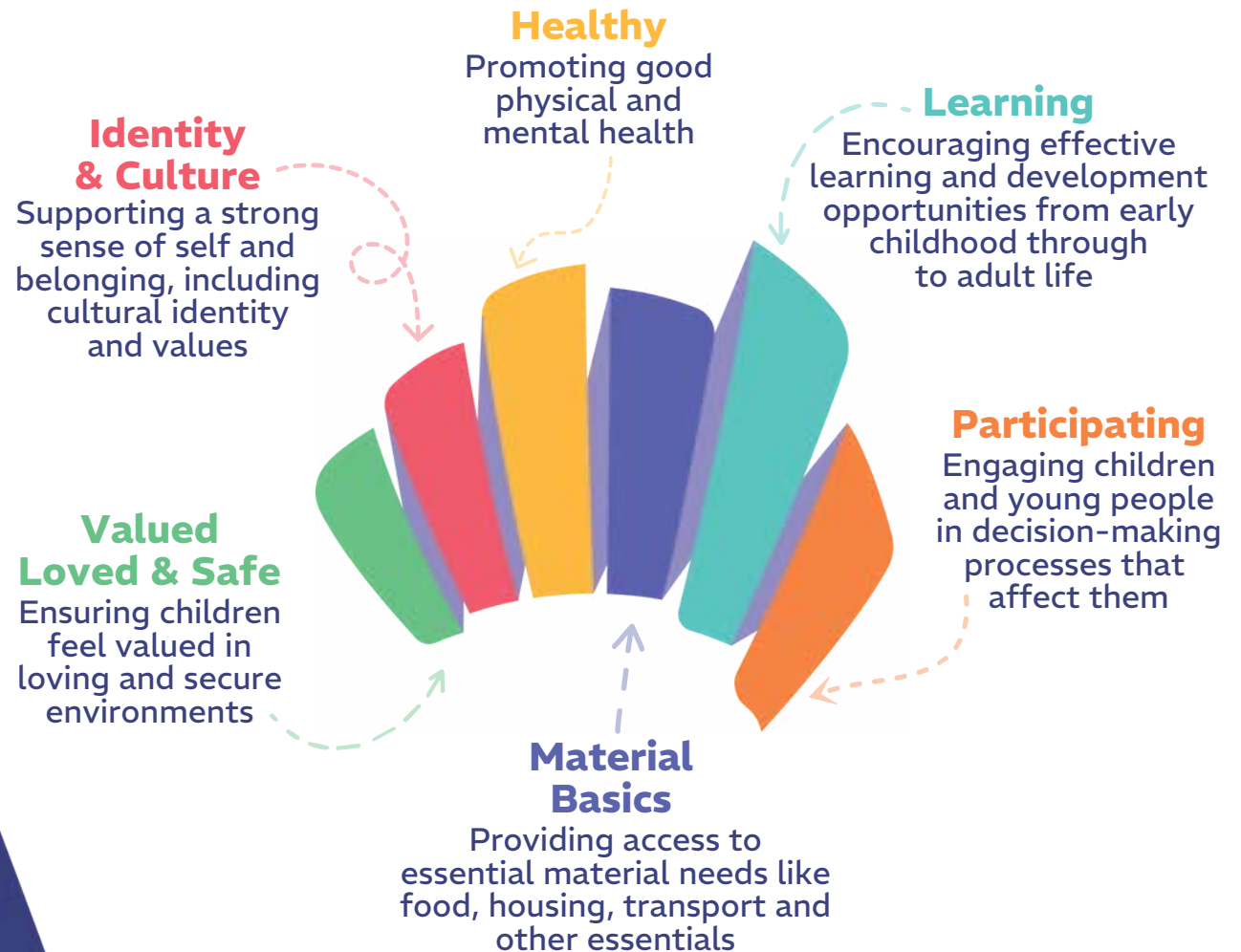
It does, however, provide a starting point. It shows what we can do now to begin to build a brighter future together.

Prue Warrilow
CEO, ARACY

THE NEST

The Nest is Australia's first evidence-based framework, developed by ARACY, to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people. Launched in 2013 after extensive consultations with over 4,000 children, families, and experts. The Nest is now being used across Australia and around the world.

The Nest provides a comprehensive approach to child and youth wellbeing through these six interlinked domains...



About this report

 **117** reports

 **Covering 5** years

 **Including the voices of 10,000+** children and young people

Young and Wise is a collation of consultations undertaken with children and young people in Australia over the last five years.

It includes consultations undertaken via survey, conversation, videos, artworks and other means. It is not an exhaustive review. We aimed to identify the recurring themes from holistic consultations about wellbeing, supplemented by reports focusing on specific groups or topics.

The full report covers birth to 25 years. It is structured by age and the six wellbeing domains of Australia's wellbeing framework, The Nest developed by ARACY. Here we have summarised the themes and recommended actions stakeholders can take to support all young Australians to thrive.



Key recommendations

1

Give children the best start in life:

Invest in creating safe, supportive, and nourishing home and learning environments for young children by eradicating poverty, strengthening parenting supports, and investing in a robust early childhood education and care sector in the first 2000 days.

4

Enhance wellbeing literacy:

Empower children and young people to support their own mental health and broader wellbeing, especially by developing skills healthy relationships, managing stress, optimising their physical health, and recognising the power of formal education systems to facilitate this.

2

Cultivate positive mental health:

Embed a cross-sectoral, prevention-focused, life-course approach to fostering positive mental wellbeing by addressing evidence-based determinants of mental health.

5

Foster belonging and connectedness:

Recognise and address belonging and loneliness as powerful determinants of physical, mental, and social wellbeing and the challenges faced by children and young people around stigma and belonging.

3

Prioritise the environment:

Prioritise climate change and protecting the environment in all policies and practices, and ensure that children and young people have access to balanced, age-appropriate media sharing information about climate action and outcomes.

6

Embed children's voice:

Embed a culture of child and youth participation by linking funding opportunities and performance indicators to genuine child and youth partnerships and co-design.

Purpose

Young and Wise answers the call from children and young people to see their words brought to action. It aims to:

- 1 Highlight existing research**
- 2 Synthesise findings to inform action**
- 3 Inform and guide future consultation**

This work is underpinned by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms children's right to have a say in decisions that affect them.

Process

ARACY reviewed consultations from established sources (e.g. Children's Commissioners) and scientific literature to understand children's and young people's perspectives on their wellbeing.

We focused on open-response studies to minimise researcher bias and to gain holistic views.

We supplemented these with additional narrower-focus studies to ensure the voices of those less heard were also amplified and further examine specific wellbeing issues.

"Youth should have a voice in politics at all levels of government."

16 years, Young and Wise Advisory Group



Summary of Key Findings

- **Co-creating solutions:** Most consultations focused on identifying needs. There's a strong desire from young people in co-creating *solutions*.
- **Including younger children:** Voices of younger children were often missing.
- **Nature:** Nature is vital for wellbeing at all ages, with environmental and climate concerns emerging in the middle years.
- **Belonging:** Feeling of belonging is crucial at all ages but tends to weaken during the middle years and adolescence.
- **Supporting the middle years and adolescence:** Multiple aspects of wellbeing begin to decline in the middle years and continue through adolescence, highlighting this as a critical period for intervention.
- **Stress, school, and mental health:** Stress especially linked to school was a significant issue and impacted mental health. Young people view education as an opportunity to support their wellbeing and prepare them for the future.
- **Transitions:** Key transitions such as exiting high school and becoming independent can be stressful. Transitioning from out of out-of-home care is especially challenging.
- **Gender differences:** Challenges differed across genders, such as increased mental health challenges for young women and gender diverse youth.
- **COVID-19:** The pandemic worsened existing issues.
- **Having a say:** Children and young people wanted to feel heard within their families, communities, across government, services, and systems.

What young people have said





Mental Health

Physical Health

Health Services



► Our findings:

- Mental health challenges were much higher among young LGBTQA+ people, young people with disability and girls.
- Stigma was a specific deterrent to seeking help for mental health concerns and health services more broadly, as well as concerns about privacy.
- Young people described challenges accessing supports due to complex systems resulting in a prolonged lack of help or complete disengagement.
- Friendship were an important source of emotional and practical support for young people. Many young people actively sought information to help their friends.
- The middle years and early adolescence was a period of vulnerability. Reduced psychological wellbeing and body dissatisfaction emerged during this time, particularly on entry and progression through high school.

One of the really effective ones was basically getting university funding for mental health first aid training for academics and students...I think policy solutions like that are pretty trustworthy. Like, there's not much that can really, you know, go wrong.

Young Adult, Young an Wise Advisory Group



Healthy | Mental Health

► We recommend:

- Leveraging the protective effects of exercise, sleep, nutrition, and stress management on mental health.
- Empowering young people to cultivate positive mental health and understand how to support their own and their peers' wellbeing by increasing mental health and wellbeing literacy, including through formal education.
- Combating stigma with more open mental health discussions among families, communities, and schools.
- Partnering with children and young people with diverse experiences to cultivate inclusive and tailored mental health services and supports.
- Partnering with diverse children and young people to better understand and harness ways social media can support mental health and minimise any harms.





Healthy | Physical Health

► Our findings:

- The middle years was recognised as an opportunity to improve healthy behaviours where motivation was higher. Younger children tend to value and prioritise healthy behaviours more than older children.
- Entry and progression through high school coincides with lower prioritisation of healthy behaviours including healthy eating, exercise, attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs, and an increase in stress. This was especially so among girls.
- Healthy eating, sleep, and recreational drugs were topics often not well understood by children and young people.
- Vaping is a significant issue for young people. Often used to manage stress, a large proportion of young people have trouble finding age-appropriate supports for alcohol and other drugs.
- Many young people in the out-of-home care system reflect that their health needs, including health education, documentation, medical history and skills to navigate health systems were not adequately met, and they have gaps in their knowledge about basic health topics like dental hygiene and women's health.

Imagine a 17-year-old, pregnant, black, female young person that had her hair looking really crazy, walk into a place and go: 'Oh, I need a place to stay'. You don't get taken that seriously...unless you present yourself like someone that can be listened to, you will be passed around like a ball, like over and over again"

21-year-old, female,
Consumer Health Forum of Australia



Healthy | Physical Health

► We recommend:

- Partnering with diverse children and young people to better understand and optimise healthy behaviours as an opportunity to support both physical and mental health.
- Leveraging the high healthy motivation seen in the middle years to influence health knowledge and behaviours during adolescence.
- Co-designing health education curricula with diverse children and young people, especially around sexual health, drugs and alcohol, exercise, sleep, and nutrition.
- Young people asked for education about health effects of vaping, navigating social pressures, and where to go for help with vaping.
- Young people with care experience asked for help accessing resources, support for mental health and wellbeing, and guidance for independent living when exiting the care system.





► Our findings:

- There was a large amount of consultation with young people and their interactions with health services and information.
- Stigma and service accessibility were the most prominent themes.
- Stigma was experienced based on their age, mental health condition, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, and experience of homelessness. Stigma was compounded when young people belonged to more than one group, known as mixed marginalisation.
- Cost and unsuitable opening hours were the most common barriers to accessing services. Others included social barriers (e.g. embarrassment, privacy concerns, cultural reasons) as well as logistical barriers (e.g. transport, Medicare card).
- Young people spoke of needing support navigating the health care system, including knowing which service to use, how to engage with digital healthcare, and transitioning from paediatric to adult health care systems.

Like people want a place...where either there's no record of you going there, or it's like a space where you know you can say it and you won't be in trouble or looked at differently. It's solely just there to help.

High school student,
Young and Wise Advisory Group



► **We recommend:**

- Partnering with diverse children and young people to address stigma and other barriers and tailor health services and information to meet their needs.
- Young people have asked for health professionals, information, and services to be more inclusive and address stigma by:
 - Improving training for health professionals about marginalisation
 - Co-designing health resources with young people
 - More diversity in narratives about young people
 - Having clinicians with diverse backgrounds
- Young people have asked for health policies and processes to be considered from an intersectional lens i.e. how these systems interact with young people who are marginalised and with each other.





Valued, Loved, and Safe

Environment

Family and home

Community Safety



Valued, Loved, and Safe | Environment

► Our findings:

- All ages referred to the importance of the natural environment to their sense of safety and overall wellbeing.
- Climate change was linked to their feelings of safety and mental health. Younger children were influenced by adult's attitude, while older children were influenced by social media.
- First Nations young people speak specifically of 'climate justice' which acknowledges the differential impacts of climate change on people based on age, gender, race, and other factors.

I think we should create areas in cities for animals and plants by transforming dirty, black cities into large, green areas where animals and humans live in cooperation.

8 year old

In our generation, we are going to be most affected by climate change. Governments should take action to combat climate change and protect our environment.

18-24 year old



Valued, Loved, and Safe | Environment

► We recommend:

- Prioritise climate and the environment in policy.
- Partner with children and young people to ensure natural play spaces are available and accessible in their communities.
- Engage children and young people in climate policy and action.
- Ensure the provision of balanced media that is accessible to children about climate, and especially during natural disasters.
- Recognise climate change as a factor in mental health policies





Valued, Loved, and Safe | Family and Home

► Our findings:

- Young children told us the most important thing is for them to feel safe, that they are cared for, and that they have a home.
- First Nations children, children with disability, girls, and gender diverse young people were less likely to feel safe at home.
- Family conflict and domestic violence is a common concern.
- Sexually and gender diverse young people pointed to the emotional abuse of family rejection and the sparsity of support services including accommodation.
- Safe accommodation, mental health supports, and help with basic needs like food and clothes were the most important things to keep young people safe.

**I sometimes feel stressed
about little things, but my
family, mainly mum and
my friends help**

11 year old



Valued, Loved, and Safe | Family and Home

► We recommend:

- Partner with diverse children and young people to:
 - Better understand how to support feelings of safety at home.
 - Identify the services and supports they need when they are not safe, including youth-friendly accommodation.
- Partner with children and young people who have witnessed family violence to better understand how they can be identified and supported.
- Understand and address the drivers of increased violence at home experienced by young females and gender diverse young people.
- Prioritise evidence-based supports for parents and caregivers in providing a safe family home.
- Respect, connect with, and empower First Nations communities to self-determine child safety efforts.





Valued, Loved, and Safe | Community Safety

► Our findings:

- Children and young people reported feeling safe online and in their communities about half of the time. Limited information was available on the impact of social media on wellbeing in Australia.
- Certain groups were less likely to feel safe in their communities than others, including:
 - Children in the middle years
 - First Nations children
 - Children with a disability
 - Gender diverse young people
 - Young people with a mental health condition
 - Females
- Crowds, open spaces, the presence of friendly people and/or people they know, the availability of safe spaces to live, and the absence of violence help children feel safe.
- Not being able to access important information (particularly during crises), people who are rude, insufficient lighting, and insufficient security staff make them feel less safe.

Children and young people in the middle years from disadvantaged or complex backgrounds have told us that the most important services and supports to keep them safe are:

- 1. A safe place to live**
- 2. Talking to an adult they can trust**
- 3. No violence**



Valued, Loved, and Safe | Community Safety

► We recommend:

- Investment in understanding the impact of social media on wellbeing for children and young people, to amplify the benefits and mitigate the harms.
- Partnering with diverse children and young people to better understand and increase their actual and perceived safety online and in their communities.
- Include young carers and neurodiverse children and young people in research and policy as distinct demographic groups.
- Ensure the provision of balanced media that is child-friendly, especially during pandemics or natural disasters.





Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

Belonging

Equity and discrimination

Culture



Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Belonging

► Our findings:

- Feelings of belonging, connectedness, and positive sense of self decline begin to decline in the middle years and continues throughout high school. This was most pronounced among females.
- About a quarter of adolescents report frequently feeling lonely.
- Peer friendships were nominated as the main factor underlying a sense of belonging at school.
- Family, friends, workplace, housing, recreational activities, and common shared lived experiences supported a sense of belonging.

The community is a great place for people my age because everyone is close-knit and feels like a family, as everyone knows everyone.

16 year old



Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Belonging

► We recommend:

- Routine national collection and measurement of children and young peoples sense of belonging across all ages, from early childhood through to early adulthood.
- Leveraging formal education systems to support children and young people to feel confident, capable, foster self-efficacy and support their social-emotional skills.
- We recommend local government partner with young people of diverse lived experience to identify ways to improve community belonging, including the co-design of more youth-friendly spaces for recreation and socialising, especially for older adolescents.





Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Equity & Discrimination

► Our findings:

- Equity and discrimination was the second most important issue of national concern among adolescents.
- Young people describe experiencing discrimination due to their age, gender, ethnicity, First Nations identity, mental health conditions, and socioeconomic disadvantage in formal settings, including at school, in employment settings, and by the health and justice systems.
- Gender diverse young people were consistently identified facing greater challenges terms of mental health, safety, homelessness, belonging, and stigma. Gender diverse young people describe needing to hide their gender identity due to fear of discrimination.
- Children living with disability indicated most do not want to be identified by their disability first.

It feels good to be heard in Koori Court. They're not just listening to my lawyer, but to me, and that's the way it should be

Participant, VIC
(Cerreto A. & Koorie Youth Council, 2018)



Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Equity & Discrimination

► We recommend:

- Stakeholders partner with children and young people of diverse lived experience to better understand and address their experience of equity and discrimination across communities, places of education and employment, and systems.
- Gender diverse young people be recognised as a priority population in terms of health and social outcomes, with increased investment in addressing stigma.





Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Culture

► Our findings:

- Connecting with culture and participating in cultural activities and in language is central to the lives of First Nations children.
- Children and young people in the middle years indicate that connections with family and friends and participating in the community are vital to their wellbeing. However, young people in the middle years are not often asked about culture, traditions, and heritage.

...if you belong at a school [where] you feel comfortable and feel safe and don't feel embarrassed ...you feel comfortable talking to your friends about a problem and feel like they accept you, and that you belong

Year 6/7 student



Positive Sense of Identity and Culture | Culture

► We recommend:

- Learning from First Nations' communities about the importance of culture to wellbeing.
- Stakeholders consult with children and young people of diverse lived experience about their conceptions and practice of culture and traditions, so they can be supported to participate and build their identity in ways that are important to them, their family, and their community.





Material Basics

Poverty

Employment



Material Basics | Poverty

► Our findings:

- Younger children notice and are impacted by household financial pressures, for example through noticing parental stress.
- The ability of children to spend time with their family interacted with household income, for example eating out and holidays. Cost is a factor for accessing organised sports and lessons.
- Among children, poverty is linked with social exclusion, including bullying and disengagement from school and challenges with friendships.
- About 1 in 20 adolescents report poverty affecting their access to food, paying for school excursions, and car expenses. Financial barriers were the most common barrier to achieving their plans for beyond high school.
- About 1 in 5 young adults reported running out of money for accommodation and food in the last year.

...even though I was very young, I went through enough misery to last a lifetime. First we didn't have anywhere to live, after when I started school, everybody teased me, I didn't have any friends, my accent was different, I was an outsider. I didn't belong.

16 year old



Material Basics | Poverty

► We recommend:

- The Australian Government develop an agreed definition of poverty, which should be included as a key indicator in the Measuring What Matters wellbeing framework.
- A permanent increase in the base rate for income assisted payments for children and young people living in poverty.
- The Australian Government develop and implement a method of setting social security payments that ensure children and young people are having their material needs met in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and that the Prime Minister report to Parliament annually on the processes by which the needs of children and young people have been considered in setting these payments.
- Schools, local governments, and other communities work with children, young people, and families to ensure that they are not being excluded on the basis of their material wealth.





Material Basics | Employment

► Our findings:

- Underemployment and unemployment were common, especially among young people in rural areas.
- Young people, particularly those with disability, report challenges competing in the job market.
- Barriers to achieving career goals included their grades, lack of practical experience, geographic location of job opportunities, industry competition, and mental health.
- Enablers to achieving career goals were participation in tertiary education, doing well in their education, and gaining relevant experience.





Material Basics | Employme

► We recommend:

- Bolstering school-based careers counselling, supported by accessible and well-promoted online resources developed in partnership with young people with diverse lived experience.
- Prioritise employment programs targeted at young people that counter the negative effects of the 'gig economy', insecure work, and underemployment.
- Partner with young people of diverse lived experience to better understand and support their career aspirations and employment opportunities.





Participating

Having a say

Community

Politics



Participating | Having a Say

► Our findings:

- Children and young people strongly want to be heard when decisions are made that affect them at home, in their communities, by government, and in research.
- Formal consultation is empowering, rewarding and helps them develop important skills.
- Many young people do not feel heard. Some describe feeling “powerless”, “invisible”, “helpless”, “frustrated” and “excluded”.
- This is especially so for young people with disability, young people in contact with the child protection system, and those living in disadvantaged areas.

**[I want grown-ups to know]
that kids have a voice about
things and we will try our
hardest to show & express
the voice we have that we
get told to hide**

13 year-old



Participating | Having a Say

► We recommend:

- A dedicated national child and young person's wellbeing framework should be implemented alongside the current Measuring What Matters framework. This should include a breadth of information sensitive to children's age and developmental stage.
- Government, NGOs, researchers, service providers, philanthropists, and other stakeholders making decisions which affect children and young people, embed working in partnership with them as an integral part of their work in design, development and delivery.
- Young people would like dedicated spaces to share their views, for consultation to be meaningful, for opportunities to drive their own initiatives, and to be kept informed about how their feedback has been used.
- We recommend stakeholders empower adults to engage and consult meaningfully with children through evidence-based training programs and consultation guidelines.





Participating | Community

► Our findings:

- Children want to be active and socialise outdoors in nature, and in built recreational facilities. They want more spaces to do this in.
- Proximity to public green spaces was especially important if they didn't have a backyard. A five-to-ten-minute walk was generally considered reasonable.
- Organised sports helped them meet new people, make friends, alleviate boredom, and support mental health. The cost was a factor for access.
- Children with disability appreciated activities outside the school community that were designed for children with disabilities and met their needs.
- Less than half of adolescents report enough youth-friendly spaces for recreation and socialising.
- Young people in our Young and Wise Advisory Group noted a lack of research around social media, and how participating in this affects wellbeing.

Call for more free third spaces for young people to exercise and chill out in outside of cities...looking at how we can transform those preexisting spaces into places where community can connect.

Young adult, Young and Wise Advisory Group



Participating | Community

► We recommend:

- Stakeholders recognise and prioritise 'third spaces' (i.e. spaces away from school and home) for social, emotional, and mental health of children and young people.
- All local government embed genuine partnership with children and young people with diverse lived experience to develop and implement ways they can enjoy and participate meaningfully in their communities.
- Stakeholders work in partnership with diverse children, young people, and families to better understand the impact of social media and technology on wellbeing and develop ways harms can be mitigated and benefits can be amplified.





Participating | Politics

► Our findings:

- All ages, including children, expressed a strong desire to be listened to by government.
- Young people had mixed views about their ability to influence politics, and many felt they were not adequately represented.
- Housing, employment, climate, and mental health were considered top government priorities.

► We recommend:

- Lowering the voting age across all jurisdictions to 16 years of age, with an opt-in approach so that young people aged 16 to 17 may choose to vote without being penalised if they do not vote.
- Partnering with diverse children and young people to develop and implement a variety of ways they can contribute meaningfully to government decision-making.

I wish there was more about civic opportunities and civic leadership

High school student, Young and Wise Advisory Group



Learning

Stress

Safe and Inclusive

Transitions



► Our findings:

- A strong theme among children in the middle years and adolescents was school stress. It affects their mental health and increased with entry and progression through high school.
- Among older children, sources of stress included academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties and transitions to high school and tertiary education.
- School stress affected 60 to 90 per cent of children and young people across various reports.

When I was in the earlier years of high school, like Year 7 or 8, there was more support... as you get older, people expect you to just deal with it yourself.

High school student, Young and Wise Advisory Group



Learning | Stress

► We recommend:

- Reorientating the education systems to have a greater focus on wellbeing holistically, in alignment with the model proposed in Reinventing Australian Schools (Sahlberg et al, 2023).
- Incorporating wellbeing outcomes alongside academic outcomes into the next National School Reform Agreement. Indicators should include subjective data i.e. the perceptions and experiences of students.
- Supporting children to develop practical skills aimed at reducing stress such as time management, and the diversification of teaching and assessment methods.
- Young people suggested a variety of ways they can be supported:
 - Manageable workloads.
 - Understanding by teachers and parents about workloads and stress.
 - Support building practical skills such as time management.
 - Diversifying final year assessment processes.





► Our findings:

- Bullying was a top area of concern among children and young people in the middle years.
- Many adolescents reported feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school due to their gender or sexuality, which contributed to missed days at school.
- Less than half of Australians age 18 to 24 years felt they belonged at their educational institution.
- Children and young people who belonged to a marginalised group were more likely to be bullied, less likely to feel safe, and less likely to feel they belonged.
- Challenges of belonging to a marginalised group included language barriers, fitting into mainstream education, engagement where family dynamics were complex, bullying or discrimination based on their sexuality or gender.

I think a lot of the things...shouldn't just be implemented during a pandemic...the financial or emotional support should be delivered either way and it should almost be seen as an individualised approach to children who can't attend school

High school student, Young and Wise Advisory Group



► **We recommend:**

- Stakeholders work in partnership with young people of diverse lived experience to better understand ways of fostering safer, more inclusive educational environment and empowering young people to develop a sense of belonging.
- Ongoing investment in evidence-based anti-bullying programs and peer support systems.





Learning | Transitions

► Our findings:

- Transitioning from primary to secondary school was associated with a decline in a range of wellbeing measures, including feelings of belonging, healthy eating and outdoor activity, body image, and participation in co-curricular activities.
- Transitioning from high school into early adulthood was also associated with high levels of stress. This included transitioning into employment or further education, financial independence, and moving out of home.
- Young people in out-of-home care indicated that they are inadequately supported when transitioning to independence.

**I didn't know cooking, cleaning, nothing...
I didn't know how to chop a tomato. How
am I supposed to be independent? You're
kicked out when you don't know anything.
All I knew how to do is make crack, man.
Sorry, but, they didn't give me any of
those life skills.**

21-year-old care leaver



► **We recommend:**

- Stakeholders work in partnership with children and young people to better understand and support transitions through the middle years and entry and exit from high school particularly regarding:
 - Relationships and belonging.
 - Physical and mental health.
 - Stress around academic performance and learning pathways within and post-school.
 - Transitioning into adulthood, and life skills.



We also asked our network of over 150 young people 'What opportunities should decision-makers provide for young people to get involved?'. Here's what they said:

**Empower young people!
Fund youth councils,
projects & training to
address wellbeing priorities
in their communities. Their
voice matters!**

**"Youth
Advisory
Committee"**

**The right to vote, a way to get
their voices heard and for them
to trust that mechanism,
actively asking them for their
opinions on things, making
decisions that actively benefit
young people.**

**"The right to
vote"**

**Spaces where young people
can OPENLY talk about
intense issues like suicide,
global warming, international
conflict, and mental illness
WITHOUT stigma.
Empowering these voices.**

**"Co-design
with diverse
groups of
young people"**

**Diverse lived experience
youth advisory groups -
young carers, poverty,
regional/remote.
Open ended conversations
in focus groups with state
and federal Ministers.**

**To help create
new and improved
mechanisms for
young people to
provide input.**

**Open forums with decision
makers, getting out and
meeting with young
people in their electorate,
making priority info more
available to young people.**

Lots of people say like ohh, what do you want to see? But then it never actually happens

High School Student

"Workshops"

Have you heard of the Co-mentoring opportunity that Wales is starting up too? Basically, to not only present their ideas to the politicians and other government bodies, but also learn from them in the same way, I think many people in Australia would be interested in this.

High School Student

I find that like social media is actually so important to young people's mental health, whether that be like, positive, because you've got connections or it's negative because you're doom scrolling or you're seeing like, all of the tragedy in the world all of the time.

Young Adult

"Focus groups"

You need to think about these issues and the broadest possible sense, not just thinking about like, throw money at something, or do a little spot fix here.

It's about the whole underlying structure of and at the well we live in.

Young Adult

When stakeholders come up with solutions for young people, I feel like most of the time when that solution is made, young people aren't exactly consulted on that, we're consulted on the solution that's already been made.

High School Student

I think phones and social media should definitely be featured in there more. And I think that those two things sort of bleed into almost every issue that young people are facing.

Young Adult

ARACY's Young and Wise Report is supported by the **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care** under the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies Program.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the experiences and perspectives of children and young people, offering invaluable insights for shaping policies and programs that truly support their wellbeing.

By centering the voices of young people, the report uncovers critical issues such as the decline in wellbeing during adolescence, the impact of social media, and the urgent need for dedicated youth spaces.

With concrete recommendations for action, this report is a must-read for policymakers, educators, and anyone committed to helping all children and young people to thrive.

Read the full report

www.aracy.org.au

We thank the children and young people of Australia who shared their experiences to help create a better future.

We would also like to thank the young people who helped us understand, contextualise, and improve the findings of this report, including:

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