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1. Reports, Research Papers, Policy Initiatives etc

1.1 Child Protection

1.1.1 **Online Safety.** Lohar, S. National Child Protection Clearing House, July 2011.

This resource sheet provides information for parents to support their children's safe internet use. It also lists several Australian and international websites providing online safety information for parents and caregivers.

While internet access provides children with access to vast amounts of information and the capacity to communicate with people from across the world, it also entails potential risks and dangers including cyberbullying, stalking, and exposure to illicit, adult-only material. The internet can also be accessed by criminal offenders seeking to gain access to children and young people. The challenge is to assist children and young people to access the benefits of going online, while avoiding the risks. The resource sheet contains a series of tips for parents focusing on – monitor, protect, teach, learn and report.

Some of the key tips include -

Monitor

- Talk calmly and frankly with your child about internet use.
- Together with your child set up simple, clear and fair rules about internet use.
- Use the history button in the browser program to track the websites your child visits.
- Know how internet safety is maintained at your child's school.
- Keep the computer in a shared family area.

Protect

- Help your child identify unsuitable material.
- Either use a family-friendly internet service provider with proven online safety protocols or ask an ISP how to source and install appropriate security products.
- Educate your child on why it is unsafe to give out any personal details online.

Teach

- Encourage your child to question things on the internet.
- Search for and use educational programs or websites specifically designed for your child's age group.

Learn

- Parents should learn how to use the internet so they are able to supervise and guide children.

Report

- Any prohibited or inappropriate material should be reported to the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs25/rs25.pdf>

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1.1.2 **Evidence for improving access to homelessness services.** Black, C. & Gronda, H. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, July 2011.

This report provides a synthesis of Australian and international evidence about current access arrangements to homelessness services, the access barriers faced by those experiencing homelessness, and an overview of the varied approaches, models and mechanisms used in Australia and internationally to improve access. The report highlights persistent issues impacting on access to services and service systems for homeless people, including fragmentation and complexity of systems, poor visibility, and lack of knowledge of availability of services - particularly for those who are newly homeless, and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of different structural approaches (including legislative intervention, systems integration, service integration and enhanced service models) taken to improving access.

The report concludes by outlining principles that can underpin the development of a more accessible service system and more accessible individual services. These are:

- a more client-centred approach to service provision, including service user involvement in design and implementation of new approaches
- greater visibility of homelessness services across the community
- better integration and coordination between mainstream and homelessness services
- low barrier entry and eligibility criteria, particularly for those with complex needs
- use of system-wide streamlined or simplified intake, assessment and referral processes, and
- a combination of access mechanisms, alongside flexible and diverse service models (such as the 'one-stop

shop' model), that are responsive to the needs of their specific target groups.

<http://www.apo.org.au/research/evidence-improving-access-homelessness-services>

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1.1.3 **Refugee status report – a report on how refugee children and young people in Victoria are faring.** Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, July 2011.

This report paints a picture of how refugee children and young people who have entered Victoria under the Humanitarian Program are faring, and highlights gaps that impact on their health, wellbeing, development, learning and safety.

Status of Victoria's refugee population – Health and Demographics

- 3500-4000 people enter Victoria under the Humanitarian Program each year of which children and young people under 19 make up half of the Program entrants.
- Almost 10,000 "family units" make up half the Humanitarian Program entrants between mid 1996 to end of 2007, however, one third of these units comprised one person, over 40% were families with four or more members.
- All Humanitarian Program entrants are required to undergo a health assessment prior to their departure from their country of origin. Post arrival health checks are recommended but not mandated. Children who have post arrival health checks are better placed to receive appropriate information and treatment, including lifestyle advice, specific nutrient supplementation, ongoing screening, preventative medications and targeted treatments.
- Refugee children and young people in Victoria have much lower rates of overweight /obesity than Australian children. Around 5% are overweight compared to around 20% of Australian children.
- Up to 40% of refugee children and young people have vitamin deficiency and have a higher prevalence of anemia and iron deficiency than Australian born children.
- Refugee children have a higher prevalence of latent tuberculosis, hepatitis B, malaria and parasite diseases than Australian born children.

Status of Victoria's refugee population – Development and Learning

- Immigrants are usually able to have a fluent conversation 2-3 years after starting a new language but it takes much longer to achieve academic success.
- Children who are 8-12 years old when they arrive and who have some schooling in their first language achieve second language for academic purposes more quickly than other age groups, but they take 5-7 years to reach the standard of native born speakers.

Refugee children and young people are an expanding group in Victoria with diverse and complex backgrounds and unique individual, family and community factors affecting their health and wellbeing. They are faring well on some measures of health and wellbeing and less well on others.

<http://bsllibrary.org.au/children-families/refugee-status-report-a-report-on-how-refugee-children-and-young-people-in-victoria-are-faring-8949/>

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1.1.4 **Productivity Commission's final report into disability care and support.** Productivity Commission, 10 August 2011.

This report presents the findings of the Productivity Commission's public inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme and makes recommendations to the Australian Government, which if adopted, would transform the delivery of disability services in Australia.

Core recommendations are the establishment of:

- a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) that would provide individually tailored care and support to around 410,000 people with significant disabilities, and
- a National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS), which would cover people's lifetime care and support needs if they acquired a catastrophic injury from any accident.

Other recommendations map out the detail of the two schemes such as:

- how the schemes should be funded, structured and administered
- who and what would be covered by the schemes
- how eligibility and care and support needs would be assessed, and
- service delivery and workforce development.

While the final report's content largely reflects the draft report released on 28 February 2011, several changes have been made. For example, the final report recommends that:

- the NDIS provide supports to people who have significant and enduring psychiatric disabilities
- the NDIS fund all cases of cerebral palsy associated with pregnancy or birth
- there be no requirement for a front-end deductible for obtaining NDIS services

- police checks and other safeguards be implemented that draw on the system currently in place for working with children and cover relevant workers for a given period not a particular job, and
- the establishment of an independent, external complaints and appeals process.

Releasing the report, the Australian government announced it would immediately start working with states and territories on measures to build the foundations for the two schemes by:

- establishing a COAG select Council of Ministers to lead the reforms and an Advisory Council to the Select Council, led by Dr Jeff Harmer, to provide expert advice and
- providing an additional \$10 million to support the technical policy work that is a necessary precursor to the establishment of the schemes. For example, work is required to develop common assessment tools to determine eligibility for support; service and quality standards; and a national pricing structure, and
- working on the foundation reforms to recognise the roles and responsibilities outlined in the National Disability Agreement and National Health Reform Agreement.

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/report>

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1.2 Law and Justice

1.2.1 **The Australian Capital Territory youth justice system 2011: A report to the ACT Legislative Assembly by the Australian Capital Territory Human Rights Commission.** Roy, A. & Watchirs, H. ACT Human Rights Commission, July 2011.

This report presents the results of the Inquiry into the youth justice system in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Human Rights Audit of Bimberi Youth Justice (Detention) Centre (the review) conducted by the ACT Human Rights Commission in 2011 to investigate and report on systemic issues in relation to youth justice issues in the ACT and at Bimberi. The review commenced in January 2011 and involved a literature review of the evidence base underlying service provision in the youth justice system, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and forums with key stakeholders, and the examination of government records.

The 12 key messages from the review were:

1. A successful youth justice system needs to be embedded in the community.
2. The Government needs to identify and implement a vision through clarifying the purpose of the youth justice system and articulating the vision through relevant policies, procedures and performance measures.
3. There should be whole-of-government co-ordination which at least links the youth justice system with the ACT Government agencies responsible for child protection, housing, education and health services.
4. There needs to be co-ordination across the system so that both government and independent youth justice agencies are engaged in identifying systemic issues and areas for reform and improvement.
5. International human rights standards require that children and young people under 18 years of age are only placed in detention as a last resort. Research demonstrates that investment in early intervention, prevention and diversion programs lead to better outcomes for individual young people and the community. Evidence-based programs reduce overall expenditure in the youth justice system.
6. The youth justice system needs to be redesigned to meet the needs of young people and ensure continuity of case management services. Those in detention should be provided with specialised rehabilitation and therapeutic interventions to achieve more positive outcomes.
7. Further attention needs to be directed to staff training and support.
8. The ACT Government must commit adequate resources to address young people's need for rehabilitation to ensure the youth justice system is not harmful to the young people.
9. The current youth justice system has become overly risk averse at the expense of the rehabilitation of young people.
10. The detention centre needs to be integrated into the wider youth justice system.
11. Human rights compliance requires ongoing monitoring.
12. There is a need for "child centred practice" which places young people at the centre of workers' decisions and actions.

The report contains 224 recommendations for reforming the ACT youth justice system.

<http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/res/Volume%20One%20Low%20Res.pdf>

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1.2.2 **Postcode Justice – rural and regional disadvantage in the administration of the law in Victoria.** Coverdale, R. Deacon University Centre for Rural Regional Law and Justice, July 2011.

The Postcode Justice report focuses on the administration of the law in regional communities, through courts and tribunals and associated services. The objective of the report is to identify and examine if regional communities are disadvantaged in the administration of the law, compared with their metropolitan counterparts. Sixty-two interviews and 117 survey responses were conducted drawing on the views of regional services and organisations participating in the justice system, together with an examination of relevant literature and research.

Postcode Justice identifies a number of factors and combinations of factors that create disadvantage for people living in rural and regional Victoria when using justice system services. These factors are not universal but will vary across geographic areas, with smaller and more remote population centres generally experiencing greater disadvantage. This report examines how the lack of human service agencies in rural and regional areas affects system outcomes. Limited availability of mental health services, disability services, domestic violence services, supervised accommodation services, and counselling services in rural and regional areas, increase the likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice systems, remand and recidivism (re-offending).

The reports makes a number of recommendations to government that focuses on establishing structures that build an understanding of the impact of laws and justice system policies and programs on rural and regional communities.

http://www.apo.org.au/sites/default/files/Postcode_justice_Coverdale_2011.pdf

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1.3 Education

1.3.1 **Programs and schools catering for young people at risk of not completing their education.** Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1 July 2011.

Under the new Council of Australian Governments agreement, many new “alternative education” programs have been established to meet the needs of the growing number of young people who are disengaging from school/education. However, for young people, parents, schools and youth workers there is currently a lack of information (on a national basis) on where and how these programs operate and the services they provide.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) sought the assistance of a range of educational networks to try and gauge the scale and range of these programs and to enable advocacy for stronger support, recognition and resourcing. DSF carried out a national online survey of alternative education programs and approaches in early 2011.

There were 410 responses to the survey. These came predominantly from “responsive” programs – those that provide alternative programs in response to identified needs of individuals and groups of young people. However, there were also respondent programs concerned with preventative approaches and keeping “at risk” young people in school.

This summary presents and comments on the survey results. It also includes suggestions for further research.

http://www.dsf.org.au/component/docman/doc_download/208-learning-choices-national-scan

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1.3.2 **Does combining school and work affect school and post-school outcomes?** Lim, P. & Anlezark, A. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, August 2011.

A sizable proportion of high school students work part-time, with average work hours being 11–12 hours per week. This report uses data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) of students who were aged 15 in 2003 to look at the following questions:

- does working part-time assist or hinder academic performance? and
- does it assist the transition to the labour market?

Students with post-school plans that relate more to immediate employment work on average longer hours than Year 12 students with more academic post-school plans. It is possible that students with university intentions may be moderating their work to gain better Year 12 results, whereas students who have post-school employment plans may have already begun to be less interested in school, and are therefore intentionally forming a stronger attachment to paid employment.

Consistent with previous research, this report finds some negative effects from combining school and work on school and post-school study outcomes for those working longer hours, but positive effects on post-school employment. Combining school and work has a modest negative impact on school and post-school study outcomes when hours are long (in excess of 15–20 hours a week). Females are better able to balance school and work, with the magnitude of these negative effects generally being less than for males.

<http://www.lsay.edu.au/publications/2398.html>

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1.3.3 **The role of technology in engaging disengaged youth: final report.** Walsh, L., Lemon, B., Black, R., Mangan, C., & Collin, P. The Foundation for Young Australians, April 2011.

This report conveys the findings of a research project undertaken by The Foundation for Young Australians and the Inspire Foundation. Research findings revealed that the pattern of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use by teachers and trainers within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector remains highly uneven. Some practitioners are experimenting with technology or using it in confident and innovative ways to boost the engagement and achievement of young learners, while many others are using it in limited ways that underuse its potential.

While there is a clear need for strategies that can address these gaps and barriers, technology on its own is not sufficient to ensure the engagement of young learners. Quality learning also requires quality teaching, quality content, and positive, trusting relationships between young learners and their teachers or trainers.

The report made a number of recommendations, including:

- effective implementation of ICT in the VET sector relies upon strong endorsement from organisational leaders
- substantial investment is required to build the capacity of VET practitioners to use ICT with confidence, and
- organisational and system VET policies cannot assume equality of access, nor can they assume uniform levels of competency in ICT.

http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/files/Final%20Report_%20Diseng%20Youth_vFINAL.pdf

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1.3.4 **Setting the baseline: The National Literacy Trust's first annual survey into young people's reading – 2010 (UK).** Clark, C. National Literacy Trust, August 2011.

From November to December 2010, 18,141 young people aged 8 to 17 in the United Kingdom completed this online survey. While the survey focused on young people's attitudes towards reading, writing, communication skills and technology use, this report focuses exclusively on the reading aspect of the survey. It explores how much young people enjoy reading, how good they think they are, how often they read and how long for, what types of materials they read, how many books they read and how many books they have in the home, and how they feel about reading.

The findings of the study revealed that:

- just under half of young people enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot, and only 1 in 10 does not enjoy reading at all
- most young people rated themselves as either average (40%) or very good readers (49%)
- technology-based materials are the reading materials of choice, including text messages, email and websites, while magazines are the most frequently read non-technology genre
- most young people read outside of class every day (29%) or a few times a week (26%), and only 7% do not read outside of class. When young people read, most read for up to 30 minutes at a time
- while most young people say that they have only read one book in the past month, 3 in 10 estimate they have up to 50 books at home. Only 3% of young people do not have any books at home
- overall, young people who read more often also read more books and say that they have more books in the home compared with young people who read less frequently
- significantly more girls than boys say they enjoy reading, and girls read outside of class more frequently and for longer, and have more reading opportunities (e.g. have more books at home)
- younger people generally have more positive attitudes towards reading than their older counterparts, with a minority of young people agreeing that they only read when they have to, cannot find things to read that interest them, or would be embarrassed if their friends saw them read outside of class. Frequency of reading was found to decrease with age, although length of time increased, and
- 2 in 10 young people reported that they had never been given a book as a present, while 1 in 10 had never been to a bookshop or library.

In relation to each of these findings there were clear relationships with reading attainment, with young people who enjoy reading the most, who rate themselves as better readers, who read most frequently and for the longest periods of time, who think about reading more positively and who have greater reading opportunities (e.g. have more books in the home, have been given a book as a present or have been to a bookshop or library) tending to read above the expected level for their age.

<http://www.apo.org.au/research/setting-baseline-national-literacy-trust%E2%80%99s-first-annual-survey-young-people%E2%80%99s-reading-2010>

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1.3.5 **Realising potential: business helping schools to develop Australia's future.** Business-School Connections Roundtable, 9 May 2011.

This report outlines a practical strategy to ensure all schools have an opportunity to benefit from a business connection and to engage business as a partner in improving the educational outcomes of their students. The Australian Government established the Business-School Connections Roundtable for the purpose of developing such a strategy.

The proposed strategy aims to help in achieving the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians and the supporting priorities under the education reform agenda. The report argues that school-business relationships are a complementary component of current reforms and should not be seen as an add-on activity.

The report's 13 recommendations form the Strategy. Recommendations are grouped under four priority areas for action:

1. increasing capacity for school-business relationships
2. strengthening the context (for example, developing a culture which sees relationships with business as a key part of achieving educational outcomes)
3. engaging business as strategic partners, and
4. supporting implementation.

Specific recommendations include:

- using the National Professional Standards for Teachers and Standard for Principals to recognise and encourage development of the skills needed to build relationships with business
- creating – through a new national program – a structured cohort of school and business leaders who are experienced school-business advocates
- embedding relationships with business in school policies, programs and reporting processes
- developing guiding principles for, and a guide to evaluating, school-business relationships
- establishing an annual or biennial event to showcase and promote good practice and a national awards scheme to recognise the value of school-business relationships, and
- developing a business-sponsored social media community that facilitates school-business collaboration and connections.

The report was informed by commissioned baseline research, the business experience of Roundtable members and a national consultation process which included consultations with young people.

Themes and recommendations in the report were tested with, and received support from, five industry peak bodies — the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group, the Australian National Retailers Association, the Business Council of Australia, and the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia.

The Australian Government's response to the report was released with the report on 9 May 2011.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Documents/RoundtableReport.pdf>

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1.4 Health and Wellbeing

1.4.1 **Dental decay among Australian children.** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Dental Statistics & Research Unit, July 2011.

This report provides information on the dental decay experience of Australian children from the Child Dental Health Survey 2005. Data from this survey have been derived from routine examination data from a random sample of children enrolled in the School Dental Service.

The findings of the survey indicate that dental decay is relatively common in Australian children. Nearly half children aged 5-6 years (48.7%) had a history of dental decay in the deciduous teeth (also known as baby teeth). Likewise, nearly half of children aged 12 years (45.1%) had a history of decay in the permanent teeth. Young children from the lowest socioeconomic areas had about 70% more dental decay than children from the highest socioeconomic areas.

www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737419600

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1.4.2 **Precarious housing and health inequalities; what are the links?** Mallet, S., Bentley, R., Baker, E., Mason, K., Keys, D., Kolar, V., & Krnjacki, L. Hanover Welfare Services, 8 August 2011.

This study considers the relationship between precarious housing and health, specifically, whether or not poor health leads to precarious housing and whether or not precarious housing affects people's health.

For the purposes of this study precarious housing was defined as unaffordable housing, unsuitable housing (overcrowded, unsafe, poorly located and poor condition) and insecure housing (where tenants are subject to forced moves).

The study's key findings are that:

- people living in precarious housing are more likely to have worse health than the rest of the community
- people who experienced a combination of precarious housing elements were more likely to experience poor mental health
- no one particular element of precarious housing was more likely to produce poor health than another
- lone parents, singles, young people, older renters, children living with a sole parent and those with poor employment and educational qualifications are more at risk of precarious housing, and
- for single mothers, precarious housing creates or contributes to poor health.

<http://www.apo.org.au/research/precarious-housing-and-health-inequalities-what-are-links>

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1.4.3 Young people in nursing homes – White Paper. Winkler, D., Farnworth, L., Sloan, S., Stringer, K., & Callaway, L. Summer Foundation Ltd & Monash University, August 2011.

This paper considers recent research regarding young people in nursing homes.

Young people with severe disabilities and complex care needs require 24 hour supervision or very high levels of daily care and support and can have many years of life ahead of them. However, research indicates that because of a lack of alternative accommodation options and support services these young people often end up living in aged care facilities/nursing homes.

Currently, approximately 3,300 people (including young people) under the age of 60 are living in nursing homes in Australia. However, aged care facilities are not designed or resourced to accommodate the active involvement of young people with high clinical needs in everyday activities or support their continued participation in the community. Young people living in nursing homes are surrounded daily by people who are significantly older and they can often feel isolated from family, friends and the community.

The paper suggests that the National Disability Scheme has the potential to provide the resources to enable severely disabled young people to remain living in the community. However, there will still need to be a greater range and number of alternative accommodation options and support services if young people are to be kept out of nursing homes.

http://www.summerfoundation.org.au/attachments/151_White%20Paper%20Young%20People%20in%20Nursing%20Homes-lo.pdf

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1.4.4 The impact of domestic violence on children: a literature review. Prepared by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse for the Benevolent Society, 1 August 2011.

This literature review report (the report) examines the following areas:

- the experiences of children affected by domestic violence
- the numbers of children affected by domestic violence in Australia
- how children are affected by domestic violence
- how age, gender, and ethnicity are related to children's experiences of domestic violence, and
- coping, recovery and resiliency.

The report also discusses family law in an Australian context and the complexities associated with shared care arrangements when domestic violence is an issue. The report concludes by highlighting good practice in responding to the needs of children and families.

Key points made in the report are that:

- more than one million Australian children are affected by domestic violence
- children experience serious emotional, psychological, social, behavioural and developmental consequences as a result of experiencing violence. Infants and young children are especially at risk
- perpetrators often attack the mother-child relationship and use children in committing violence, such as threats to harm the children
- children continue to be at risk from the effects of violence during and after parents' separation, and
- children experience significant risks in shared parenting arrangements when the arrangement involves substantial shared time with the violent parent.

<http://cms.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/The-impact-of-domestic-violence-on-children.pdf>

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1.4.5 **The health and well-being of incarcerated adolescents.** The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, May 2011.

This policy document, released by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), is intended to set the standard for appropriate health care for incarcerated adolescents in Australia and New Zealand and provide a framework for improving and standardising the care provided. The policy is reportedly consistent with similar international documents. However, it pays specific attention to the over-representation of Indigenous young people in both countries' youth justice systems, and the incarceration of 17 year olds in Queensland and New Zealand adult prisons.

The policy recognises that incarcerated adolescents are more likely to (i) experience poorer health and life outcomes and disproportionately high levels of disadvantage than the general population and (ii) have limited access to, and uptake of, health care services when in the community. The policy proposes that time in custody is an opportunity to provide this vulnerable group of young people with comprehensive health care, preferably informed by evidence-based practice.

As part of the policy, the RACP supports a service for adolescents in custody that provides health screening within 24 hours of entry into detention, documents current health status, and identifies and intervenes where appropriate for health risk behaviours. The RACP is also calling for the health services offered in the youth justice system to be continued once the adolescent returns to the community.

In accordance with the policy's recommendations, the RACP will advocate that governments:

- ratify the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
- remove the reservation placed on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child thereby enabling 17 year olds in adult prisons in Queensland and New Zealand to be transferred to youth detention centres where they can receive developmentally appropriate services
- promote a tailored approach to health care for incarcerated adolescents using more intensive provision of services
- provide mental health services for adolescents that are timely and co-ordinated
- monitor and evaluate health and social outcomes for adolescents during and after incarceration and for these to be reported annually, and
- develop standardised training and education programs for all health professionals working with incarcerated adolescents.

<http://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=D7FAA370-0B87-808A-90C36BD48C54B2D8>

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1.5 Society and Culture

1.5.1 **Social capital among school students in disadvantaged communities.** Benevolent Society. Research Snapshot, July 2011.

This research, carried out by the Benevolent Society and the University of Western Sydney in schools in two disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, sought to develop a multi-dimensional measure of social capital and to explore the relationships between social capital and a range of outcomes for young people.

While social capital has been shown to facilitate a range of positive outcomes for individuals and communities, previous attempts to measure social capital in communities have been limited in scope and researchers and policy-makers are divided about whether social capital can actually be measured and, if so, how.

The research aims to:

- develop a valid and reliable tool to measure social capital
- investigate the relations between social capital and a variety of outcomes for young people, and
- assess the needs and strengths of the two target communities to inform future programs or interventions.

Importantly, the research found that school students with higher levels of social capital tended to show better mental and physical health, academic self-concept, sense of belonging in the school and community, and lower levels of perceived discrimination. These findings reinforce that social capital is a protective factor, and that both close and distant social networks all play an important role.

The Benevolent Society and University of Western Sydney are continuing their social capital research in high schools through a three year project which will deliver school-based interventions aimed at building social capital by fostering social networks and partnerships in schools and the wider community.

http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/Social_capital_among_school_students_Res_Snapshot_July_2011.pdf

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1.6 Children's Rights

1.6.1 **Responding to the children of women in prison: Making the invisible visible.** Flynn, C. Australian Institute of Family Studies, August 2011.

This study reviewed the circumstances of 20 adolescent children who experienced maternal imprisonment in Victoria.

On any given day in Australia, approximately 38,000 children have a parent in prison. Internationally, approximately two-thirds of the women in prison are the mothers of dependent children. Previous US research also indicates that around 50% of children are present at the arrest of their parent, and that this experience leads to considerable trauma. For instance, children of incarcerated mothers have been shown to experience problems including isolation, behavioural difficulties at school, anxiety, insecurity, withdrawal, anger, and mental health concerns. Victoria Police, however, currently do not have procedures for responding to the children of parents being arrested.

The findings regarding adolescent children of incarcerated mothers in the current study included:

- these children are the indirect recipients of adult justice, intersecting with the criminal justice system at many points during their lives
- maternal incarceration lead to considerable interruption to the children's care, with almost two-thirds displaced from home, often in an unplanned way and into insecure arrangements
- children experienced sustained separation from their mother as few had frequent and predictable visiting arrangements, and contact that did occur took place in poor conditions
- whilst the majority of children (16 out of 20) returned to live with their mother after her release from prison, formal planning and support occurred with only one family, and
- while parental problems (particularly chronic substance abuse) have been suggested by previous research as hindering factors in family reunification, this study indicated that such problems were not always prohibitive, and can be mediated by supportive factors, particularly informal and formal external supports (such as grandparents and/or long-term partners).

The study suggests the need for effective interventions for children, considering pre- and post-prison periods, including:

- the identification of primary carers at arrest and arresting officers to be aware of offenders' parenting responsibilities and children's care needs
- a formal family impact statement being incorporated into the pre-sentence report to assist with providing a more thorough assessment of children in their families, with attention to the likely impact of sentencing options on them
- consideration of alternatives to imprisoning mothers
- targeted support services for children, and
- formal attention to family reunification planning to soften the impact of the mother's transition home and its potential impact on child wellbeing.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq019/frq19.pdf>

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1.6.2 **Good enough for children.** aqblog: policy and practice in arts and culture, 29 September 2011.

aqblog is a forum moderated by Arts Queensland that aims to promote discussion on some of the topical issues within arts and culture policy and practice. Through a recent post on aqblog, Arts Queensland has demonstrated interest in raising the quality discourse around arts for, with and by children aged between 5 and 12 years old.

This post, by Dr Barbara Piscitelli AM, an independent arts and education consultant, notes that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights children's right to a cultural and social life and points out that, while we know the quantum of arts and cultural experiences for children may have increased, we know little about the quality of those experiences. Dr Piscitelli proposes that criteria including developmental appropriateness, flexibility, collaboration, interactivity, empowerment, connectedness, expertise and bottom-up consultative process, are essential for quality programs for children. The post concludes that a statewide policy and plan for extending the reach and regularity of children's cultural access could be useful in catalysing better quality practice for all.

Members from the arts and cultural sector and the broader public have been invited to contribute their thoughts and opinions to the discussion. For further information or to share your views visit the website at:

<http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/blog/index.php/good-enough-for-children/>

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1.6.3 Listen to Children 2011 Child Rights NGO Report. Child Rights Taskforce, May 2011.

This Report provides an overview of Australia's performance against each Article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC).

The Report acknowledges that Australia has made some progress with initiatives such as the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, the *Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, and the commitment to *Closing the Gap* on Aboriginal health and education. However, while these measures demonstrate Australia's commitment to children, the Report notes that they do not demonstrate commitment specifically to their rights, and more can be done in this arena.

Key messages from the Report include:

- Australia has not effectively incorporated human rights into policy and legislative frameworks to nurture and support children which has resulted in unacceptable gaps in the legal protection of children's rights
- significant harm to the lives, survival and healthy development of children and young people has occurred since ratification of UNCROC, including for those who are:
 - held in immigration detention
 - homeless, or
 - Aboriginal (with respect to over-representation in youth justice and out-of-home care)
- that Australia needs to learn to listen to its children, especially its Aboriginal children. The Northern Territory Intervention is an example of the Australian Government's failure to listen to the very children and communities it has attempted to help and it represents a culture of decision-making that is not informed and underpinned by the rights and principles enshrined in UNCROC, and
- in order to meet its commitments under UNCROC, Australia must begin by:
 - incorporating UNCROC comprehensively into Australian law
 - creating and implementing a comprehensive National Plan of Action for Children and Young People in partnership with children and civil society, and
 - establishing a National Children's Commissioner.

The Report makes over 100 recommendations, including in relation to 17 year olds in adult prisons, namely that:

- Australia withdraw its reservation to Article 37(c) of UNCROC[1], and
- the Queensland Government immediately pass a regulation to include 17 year olds in the juvenile justice system.

<http://www.unicef.org.au/downloads/Advocacy/Listening-to-children-single-web.aspx>

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[1] Article 37(c) of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* - "every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so." Australia's reservation provides: "*The obligation to separate children from adults in prison is accepted only to the extent that such imprisonment is considered by the responsible authorities to be feasible and consistent with the obligation that children be able to maintain contact with their families, having regard to the geography and demography of Australia. Australia therefore ratifies the Convention to the extent that it is unable to comply with the obligation imposed by Article 37(c)*".