

## Call for response (consultation papers, reviews, inquiries, discussion papers etc)

### National Conversation: National Strategy for Young Australians, 22 October 2009

The Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the Hon Kate Ellis MP have launched the National Conversation to consult with young people and the broader community on the development of the Australian Government's National Strategy for Young Australians.

Seven core priorities have been identified for the Strategy:

- empowering young Australians in their schools, institute of technology, and universities to shape their own futures
- supporting young Australians within their families
- mobilising young Australians within their communities
- enabling young Australians to participate safely and confidently on line
- equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need for employment
- strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young Australians get their lives back on track
- establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others.

Discussion points of the conversation are:

- What role do you think the Australian Government should have in supporting young people to develop positively?
- What would you expect to see in a National Strategy?
- How do you think the Government should communicate the National Strategy?

Feedback is due by **19 November 2009**. View the discussion paper at:

[www.youth.gov.au/ayf/pages/NationalConversation.htm](http://www.youth.gov.au/ayf/pages/NationalConversation.htm)

## Reports, research papers, policy initiatives etc

### **Child safety**

#### ***Young People transitioning from out of home care: a critical analysis of Australian and international policy and practice*** Mendes, P. *Australian Social Work*, Volume 62, No.3, 2009, pp.389-403, October 2009

This paper critically analyses pathways taken by care leavers, provides an overview of national and international policy and practice responses and suggests reforms aimed at improving outcomes for care leavers. This paper suggests young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society.

While most families continue to support their children when they turn 18 years of age, young people leaving out-of-home care are expected to transition to instant independence with little if any ongoing support from their State parents. Care leavers can experience significant health, social and educational deficits including homelessness, substance abuse, involvement in crime and prostitution, mental and physical health problems, poor educational and employment outcomes, inadequate social support systems, and early parenthood.

The report provides an outline of national and international policy and program approaches to support care leavers.

Approaches in Australia include:

- New South Wales has uniform state-wide support services for care leavers and an After Care Resource Centre as well as local leaving care services in all regions, and a statewide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service. Care leavers aged 15-25 years can access services but some groups are not eligible, eg. those placed in relative/kinship care and those who experienced care in other states.
- Victoria has legislation for the provision of leaving care and after-care services for young people up to 21 years of age. In 2008-09 \$3.17million was allocated to support care leavers, in addition to existing annual funding of \$1.2 million to the Office of Housing program. The government is legally obliged to assist care leavers with finances, housing, education and training, employment, legal advice, access to health and community services etc. depending on the assessed level of need, and to consider the specific needs of Aboriginal young people. The government is currently establishing a Post Care Support, Referral & Information Service in each region.
- South Australian legislation includes assistance for young people transitioning to adulthood and has developed a Transitioning from Care Policy. Government youth support teams provide support to care leavers to 25 years. Annual funding is \$500,000.
- Western Australia has services for care leavers up to 25 years of age supported by legislation requiring government to provide young people with social supports, eg. accommodation, education and training, employment assistance etc. Annual funding is \$929,000.

- Queensland legislation provides for preparation for transition from care, but does not specify any after care support and there is no designated budget. Queensland has a Transition from Care policy which in practice often leads to assistance beyond 18 years of age.
- Tasmanian legislation suggests assistance to young people transitioning to adulthood and policy provides support for 12 months after care but can be extended to 21 years of age. Annual funding is \$100,000.
- The Northern Territory has a draft bill being prepared for Parliament to provide leaving care support up till the age of 25 years (current assistance is discretionary). There is no specific leaving care budget.
- Legislation in the ACT covers preparation for leaving care, but not after care support and has no specific budget.

The author argues that the transition from care needs to become a more gradual and flexible process based on levels of maturity and skill development, rather than simply age. An effective leaving care model should include:

- a flexible and functional process for transitioning from care
- assistance with accessing and maintaining affordable and stable accommodation
- help with renegotiating relationships with family members and to develop wider informal support networks and friendship groups
- access to adequate health care
- programs of parent support for young mothers
- subsidies to undertake higher education
- supported employment programs
- financial assistance to access appropriate furniture and household items and pay advance rent and bond if necessary, and
- specialist supports for indigenous young people and those leaving care in rural, regional and remote areas.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g914458649>

***The experiences of young people: How do their living arrangements impact?*** Mission Australia, September 2009.

Over 45,000 young people aged 11 to 24 years participated in the 2008 Mission Australia National Survey of Young Australians. Of these, 375 identified as homeless or living in insecure housing and a further 135 were living in foster care. The current report explores the experiences of young people who are homeless or in foster care. Key findings from the study show that:

- Homeless respondents and those in out-of-home care were at least five times more likely than those living in 'other housing' to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Respondents who were homeless or in out-of-home care were six to seven times more likely to rely on government allowances as their main income source compared to those in 'other housing'.
- Just over 62% of homeless respondents were participating in education.
- Respondents were asked to rank items they valued from a list of 10 options. The top three responses from those in out-of-home care or 'other housing' were *family relationships*, *friendships* and *physical and mental health*. For those who were homeless, the top three were *family relationships*, *being independent* and *friendships*.
- Young people were asked to rank their concerns from a list of 15 options. *Body image* was the only issue in the top three identified by each group of respondents. For homeless respondents it was a standout issue (two in five) compared to just under 30% of those in 'other housing' or out-of-home care.
- For homeless respondents, the second and third issues of concern were *alcohol* and *bullying/emotional abuse*.
- The top concern for those in out-of-home care was *physical/sexual abuse* with 31% identifying it as a major issue, much higher than their homeless counterparts (14.5%) or those in 'other housing' (22.7%). The second and third issues for those in out-of-home care were *body image* and *suicide* respectively.
- Those in out-of-home care or 'other housing' were more likely than those who were homeless to identify *coping with stress* and *depression* as major concerns. One in ten homeless respondents, compared to one in five in both other groups identified *depression* as a significant concern.
- *Friends*, *parents* and *relative/family friend* were ranked as the main sources of advice for a personal problem for respondents in out-of-home care and 'other housing' although a smaller proportion of those in out-of-home care identified each as significant.
- The top source of advice for homeless young people was also *friends*, but their second and third responses were *community agencies* and the *internet* respectively. Over 45% of this group identified *community agencies* as a major source of advice, as did a quarter of those in out-of-home care.
- 40.7% of homeless respondents identified the *internet* as a major source of advice, as did 31% of those in out-of-home care.

The report includes the following recommendations:

1. Young people should be supported to develop and maintain healthy relationships, both as a measure to prevent homelessness and should they become homeless. This includes, where appropriate, providing continuity of positive relationships through services.
2. Young people in out-of-home-care should be supported to develop healthy relationships with their birth (where appropriate) and foster family to build a network of support that improves their wellbeing and assists them with the transition to independent living.

3. Services should be supported and funded to deliver flexible, holistic support to young people based on their individual needs, recognising the timeframes required for sustainable change and the need for post-exit support.
4. Further research should be conducted into appropriate forms of post-care support, and new programs for young people leaving care should be based on available evidence, best practice models and include an evaluation strategy.
5. Young people should be provided with high quality information on issues of concern via the medium they are most likely to use.
6. Targeted research should be undertaken to gain deeper insights on the information needs of homeless young people and those in out-of-home care.
7. That increased assessment, training and ongoing support be given to foster carers to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people in care.

<http://apo.org.au/research/experiences-young-people-how-do-their-living-arrangements-impact>

**Learning lessons from serious case reviews: year 2** *Ofsted's second year of evaluating serious case reviews: a progress report (April 2008 to March 2009)*, Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), 15 October 2009

During the period 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009, Ofsted received 174 notifications of deaths of children where abuse was or was suspected to have been a factor. Seventeen of the 173 evaluations concerned children who were looked after (in care).

Examination of cases of looked after children identified some key lessons for future practice:

- the importance of listening and directly working with children to understand their perceptions of their experiences
- the need for the looked after service to be planned and managed as part of a continuum of local authority services rather than being considered entirely separately
- the need to assign sufficient staff resources, with appropriate expertise, to provide and support services for looked after children
- the importance of following the requirements of legislation and regulations in relation to the assessment, approval, matching and support for foster carers and adopters despite the challenges of finding placements for children
- the need for management oversight to be clear so disputes between professionals can be resolved and for a clear process by which any disputes can be escalated through the management line
- the importance of ensuring that all agencies consistently fulfil their responsibilities, including the completion of personal education plans and holistic health assessments, and rigorous responses by the police and other agencies when children are missing from care.

Six groups of factors contributed to the deaths of the children or to the serious incidents in these 17 cases:

1. insufficient focus by professionals on the needs of the children
2. shortcomings within the process for assessing the children and decision-making
3. lack of consistent rigour in the assessment and approval of foster carers and adopters
4. failings in joint working between agencies
5. lack of compliance with statutory requirements and guidance
6. gaps in meeting staff training needs.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Learning-lessons-from-serious-case-reviews-year-2>

## **Youth Justice**

**Releasing the Pressure on Remand: Bail support solutions for children and young people in New South Wales**, UnitingCare Burnside and Council of Social Services NSW (NCOSS), 28 October 2009

This position paper aims to address the issue of keeping children and young people out of remand in New South Wales.

In 2008 there were 5081 children and young people on remand in NSW, up from 3623 in 2006. As only 16% of children and young people on remand will go onto receive a custodial sentence, this means that the vast majority are unnecessarily spending time in detention. In 2008, 4,400 children and young people were placed on remand in a Juvenile Justice Centre that a court later judged were not required to serve a custodial sentence.

This paper identifies several problems caused by the high number of juveniles on remand in NSW. They include damage to Indigenous communities (38.8% of children and young people on remand in 2008 were Indigenous), higher recidivism, overcrowding and assaults in detention centres, and a shift of emphasis in centres away from rehabilitation programs and towards "security warehousing".

A number of reasons are identified to show why current policies are compounding rather than alleviating juvenile crime in NSW, including:

- A lack of suitable accommodation
- 2007 amendments to s22A of the *Bail Act 1978* as well as a stretched Legal Aid system

- Bail restrictions such as non-association orders, reporting, area restrictions and curfews are extremely challenging for children and young people to comply with.

The paper suggests changes to the current system aimed at supporting children and young people in need, including access to support services which focus on keeping children and young people connected with community, engaged with education and out of the juvenile justice system, and ultimately, the adult prison system. These support services should fall into the four main areas of:

- Early intervention
- Before court
- During court
- After court.

A number of successful programs in operation in other states and territories are cited in the report. In addition, the report recommends:

- that children and young people granted bail but who remain on remand due to a lack of accommodation options should have access to a 'Residential Bail Support Program' which would be aimed at children and young people unable to find appropriate accommodation, in particular, those who are homeless or under the care of the Minister for Community Services.
- Amendment of the Bail Act 1978 to ensure that children and young people are exempt from Section 22A
- Increase the resourcing of early intervention programs for children and young people at risk of entering the juvenile justice system
- Implement mandated before court support for all children and young people who are charged with a criminal offence.
- Change court processes to ensure that a lack of accommodation is not sufficient reason to refuse bail to a child or young person.

<http://www.ncoss.org.au/content/view/2618/111/>

## **Indigenous issues**

### ***Finding our Feet – First findings from Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children***

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) October 2009.

This paper reports on a longitudinal study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants aged between 6 and 18 months, and children aged 3 ½ to 4 ½ years, from across Australia. The study sites in Queensland are Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Inala, Gold Coast, Mount Isa, Mornington, Doomadgee, Normanton, Cloncurry, and Thursday, Hammond, Horn, Badu and Moa Islands and the Northern Peninsula Area.

Parents were asked about their health, their child's health, what languages they speak, how they like to spend their time and the role of culture and community in their children's lives. Data collection began in April 2008, involving 1,687 children and their families who will be visited each year. Some of the key data from the report shows that:

- 50% of mothers reported that they smoked during pregnancy and 22% drank alcohol during pregnancy, with 79% of these stating that they drank less while pregnant.
- 97% of parents reported that their children are in excellent, very good or good health.
- 49% of all the children's grandparents provide care for them when their parents can't be there.
- 67% of parents took their child to an Indigenous cultural event, ceremony or sorry business.
- 55% of parents reported their child had a connection to country or place, and 56% identified their child with a tribal group, language group or clan.
- 44% of parents reported that they taught their child traditional arts like painting, dance, singing and making ceremonial dress, and 41% reported that they teach their child traditional practices like collecting food or hunting.
- Around 20% of parents speak one or more traditional Indigenous languages and 18% speak two languages.
- Among the older group of children, 82% speak English as their main language, over 14% speak an Indigenous language as their main language, and over 3% speak both an Indigenous language and English equally well.

[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/families/lisic/finding\\_our\\_feet/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/families/lisic/finding_our_feet/Pages/default.aspx)

### **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008**, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 30 October 2009

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey was conducted from August 2008 to April 2009 with a sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in private dwellings across Australia. The survey includes data on Indigenous children aged 0-14 years. Data for children aged 0-3 years focus on infant and maternal health topics (eg. birthweight, breastfeeding, antenatal care etc). Data for children aged 4-14 years includes key health topics (eg dental, sight or hearing problems), as well as data on language and culture.

Key data from the survey show that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4-14 years in 2008:

- 8% spoke an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language as their main language at home. One-third (33%) of Indigenous children in remote areas spoke an Indigenous language as their main language at home.

- 49% identified with a clan, tribal or language group. Rates of identification were higher for children living in remote areas than in cities.
- 73% were involved in cultural events, ceremonies or organisations in the 12 months prior to interview.
- 94% participated in some type of sporting, social or community activity.
- 31% spent at least one day a week with an Indigenous leader or elder. Indigenous children living in remote areas were more likely to spend time with an Indigenous leader or elder. Two-thirds (66%) of Indigenous children living in major cities spent no time with an Indigenous leader or elder.
- 77% had their health rated as excellent or very good. Only 4% had their health rated as fair or poor.
- 74% were physically active for at least 60 minutes every day and only 3% did no physical activity in the week prior to interview. Indigenous children living in remote areas were more likely to be physically active every day than those living in major cities (84% compared with 65%).
- 39% had teeth or gum problems, 10% experienced an ear or hearing problem and 9% experienced an eye or sight problem.
- 95% usually attended school. Of those who did not usually attend school, key reasons for non-attendance included:
  - the child was not ready or not eligible for school; or
  - the cost was too high or unaffordable.
- 62% of Indigenous children aged 4-14 years were taught about Indigenous culture at school.

Key data for children aged 0-3 include:

- Almost half (49%) of Indigenous children aged 0-3 years had birth mothers who took folate prior to or during pregnancy.
- 76% of Indigenous children aged 0-3 years had been breastfed. Children who lived in remote areas were more likely to have been breastfed than those living in major cities (85% and 72% respectively).
- 32% of Indigenous children aged 4-14 years and 31% of children aged 0-3 years lived in dwellings that required one or more additional bedrooms. Of children aged 4-14 years in remote areas, 59% lived in dwellings that required additional bedrooms, as did a similar proportion (54%) of children aged 0-3 years.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyCatalogue/ABB28B9B3A7D6E4ACA25765E0021ADAE?Opendocument>

***Indigenous housing needs 2009: a multi-measure needs model***, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 8 October 2009

This report presents the most recent data on the level of Indigenous housing need across five dimensions. The report estimates the current dwelling need gap and provides projections of Indigenous housing need. The Indigenous population experiences higher rates of homelessness and overcrowding than the non-Indigenous population. Whilst non-Indigenous Australians experience higher rates of affordability need, houses are least affordable for Indigenous Australians living in major cities. The number of additional dwellings required to address these problems is estimated to be 9,795. Remote areas continued to have the highest proportion of dwellings requiring major repair or replacement.

Key data relevant to Queensland and to children and young people include:

- The jurisdictions with the highest estimated resident Indigenous populations were New South Wales (152,885 or 30%) and Queensland (144,885 or 28%)
- Indigenous households are larger than non-Indigenous households (average of 3.3 persons per household, compared with 2.5). One of the major factors contributing to this difference is the higher number of dependent children in Indigenous households. For all Indigenous family types, the average number of dependent children was 1.1, compared with 0.5 for non-Indigenous households.
- Queensland had the largest number of moderate overcrowding among Indigenous households (6,235).
- The proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households was 14.8% in Queensland, and was particularly higher in remote and very remote areas. Western Australia and the Northern Territory had higher rates of overcrowding at 16% and 38.5% respectively.
- Western Australia had the highest proportion of dwellings requiring major repair or replacement (38%), followed by Queensland (32%).
- Queensland had the highest proportion of dwellings requiring major repair or replacement in non-remote areas (35%)
- The number of dwellings required to meet 'extreme need' varies by jurisdiction with the largest number required in the Northern Territory (3,360) followed by Queensland (3,014).
- The number of dwellings required to reduce overcrowding is highest in the Northern Territory (2,212) and Queensland (1,670).
- The number and proportion of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness was largest in Queensland (2,148) followed by New South Wales (1,961).
- The Crisis Accommodation Program provides capital funding for services funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). In 2007–08, there were 21,300 Indigenous clients and 19,100 accompanying children who received support from SAAP. Indigenous clients constituted 18% of all clients aged 10 years and over supported by SAAP and 26% of all accompanying children assisted by SAAP (AIHW 2008a).

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10635>

## Law

**Domestic Violence Laws in Australia**, Australian Government Solicitor, June 2009 (released 22 September 2009)

The *Domestic Violence Laws in Australia* report provides an overview of Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand legislation and will be used to develop the Australian Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*.

The report provides an analysis of overlaps and gaps between the *Family Law Act 1975* and State and Territory domestic violence protection orders. The potential for conflict is reported as being greatest when a parenting order under the Family Law Act and a state or territory domestic violence protection order are in force concurrently. This potential for conflict derives from an inherent tension in the Family Law Act between facilitating children's meaningful contact with both parents and protecting children and their parents from family violence. The report suggests that it is rare for a court to deny a parent contact with a child, including cases involving allegations of family violence.

[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np\\_time\\_for\\_action/domestic\\_violence\\_laws/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/domestic_violence_laws/Pages/default.aspx)

**Australian child protection legislation**, Holzer, P., & Lamont, L. National Child Protection Clearinghouse Resource Sheet No. 14. Australian Institute of Family Studies. October 2009.

This Resource Sheet provides a brief overview of child protection legislation across state and territory jurisdictions in Australia. It identifies similar guiding principles contained within legislation across Australia, including:

- A best interest principle
- Active use of early intervention services (however, the delivery of services varies across jurisdictions)
- The participation of children and young people in decision-making and consultation to seek the views of children on issues affecting their lives.
- Out-of-home care
- Culturally specific responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- after care support (however, variations exist in the ages to which child protection departments provide support). Queensland has provisions but the age to which support is provided is not stated
- Permanency planning and stability of care (as a recent development not all jurisdictions have implemented legislative provisions around this aspect of service planning and delivery).

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs14/rs14.html>

## Children's rights

**Children's Commissioners and Guardians**, Lamont, A. & Holzer, P. National Child Protection Clearinghouse Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2009

This resource sheet provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities, as well as the legislative mandate for Children's Commissioners and/or Child Guardians across Australia.

Queensland became the first state to establish an independent statutory body in 1996 with the development of the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. Since then, each state and territory in Australia has developed independent children's commissions and/or guardians intended to represent and ensure the rights of all children. The establishment of independent state bodies has been important for providing a voice for children in decision-making. This resource sheet outlines how Commissioners are appointed, the differences between a commissioner and a child guardian and overviews their functions.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs15/rs15.html>

**Guide to Non-discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child** Children's Rights Information Network, October 2009

This web-based toolkit includes information and advocacy ideas to promote children's right to non-discrimination. It explores how discrimination affects the full range of children's rights, with a particular focus on age-based discrimination. The toolkit aims to:

- promote understanding of how discrimination affects all children's rights
- shed light on age discrimination against children
- support the removal of barriers to all children's inclusion

The Guide shows how article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the right to non-discrimination – could be applied to every right contained in the Convention. The Guide is available at

<http://www.crin.org/Discrimination/About/index.asp>

**National Human Rights Consultation Report** National Human Rights Consultation Committee, 30 September 2009

The National Human Rights Consultation aimed to seek a range of views from across Australia about the protection and promotion of human rights and on 30 September 2009, the National Human Rights Consultation Committee handed its report to the Attorney-General. The Government will consider the report in the development of future human rights policy for Australia.

Children were identified as requiring special protections. The community's views on the human rights of children were raised in various contexts, for example, disability, homelessness, asylum seekers and detention, life in Indigenous communities, children experiencing domestic violence, the rights of the unborn child and the rights of children to a sustainable environment.

Based on the results of the consultation, the report makes 31 recommendations focused on the following themes:

- Creating a human rights culture, including the education of children about rights and civics education
- Human rights in policy and legislation
- Human rights in practice
- Human rights and Indigenous Australians
- A Human Rights Act, including the right of children to be protected by family, society and the State

The full report can be accessed at: <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/Report>

**Progress for Children: A report card on child protection** UNICEF, October 2009

This compendium of data serves as a report card on global and national efforts to protect the rights of children. The report gathers together for the first time data on a range of issues that impact on children, including sexual abuse and trafficking, child marriage, physical punishment of children, child labour, birth registration, the harmful traditional practice of female genital cutting, and attitudes toward violence against women inside marriage.

The report finds that:

- more than half of the children in detention worldwide have not been tried or sentenced
- more than 150 million children between 5 and 14 years of age are engaged in child labour
- more than half of woman and girls in developing countries think that wife-beating is acceptable
- during the past decade, the number of children in conflict with the law has increased in nearly all countries in East Asia and the Pacific.

The report offers a strategy to improve child protection, identifying five areas of activity that are needed to improve protective environments for children:

- 1) Improving child protection systems
- 2) Promoting social change
- 3) Enhancing child protection in emergencies
- 4) Strengthening partnerships for greater impact
- 5) Collecting reliable data and using such data to achieve concrete results for children.

[http://www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_51312.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_51312.html)

**Immigration detention and offshore processing on Christmas Island**, Australian Human Rights Commission, 23 October 2009

This report follows the Australian Human Rights Commission visit to the Christmas Island immigration detention facilities in July 2009 and documents the Commission's ongoing concern with mandatory detention and offshore processing of asylum seekers on Christmas Island. The Commission's concerns specifically relating to children and young people can be summarised as follows:

- Asylum seekers (including children) who arrive by boat without a valid visa in an excised offshore place are mandatorily detained on Christmas Island despite the fact that the Migration Act does not require this.
- Some children are detained in a closed immigration detention facility. The Commission considers this a concerning regression from changes to the Migration Act which affirmed that children should only be detained as a last resort.
- There is a conflict of interest created by having the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship or DIAC officers act as the legal guardian for unaccompanied minors detained on Christmas Island. There is also a lack of clarity about responsibilities and procedures relating to child welfare and protection for children in immigration detention on the island.
- Asylum seekers are detained in a small community in a remote location where their access to appropriate services including health and mental health care, legal advice, cultural and religious support, and community-based advocacy and support networks is limited.
- Immigration detention are not appropriate for detaining asylum seekers. The Immigration Detention Centre is a high security detention centre that looks like a prison and is not appropriate for unaccompanied minors or families with children.

*Continued...*

The Commission reiterates its past recommendations that the provisions of the Migration Act relating to excised offshore places should be repealed; people should not be held in immigration detention on Christmas Island; and all unauthorised arrivals who make claims for asylum should have those claims assessed through the refugee status determination system that applies under the Migration Act.

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human\\_rights/immigration/idc2009\\_xmas\\_island.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/idc2009_xmas_island.html)

### **Measuring Maturity - Understanding children's 'evolving capacities',** Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)

Review 23, 12 October 2009

Children face a confusing array of minimum ages at which they are deemed capable of making decisions for themselves. The age at which children can have a say in their medical treatment, get married or vote can vary across and even within cultures. The legal minimum age may or may not reflect what children themselves feel they are capable of.

The Review queries whether rigid age based limits are the best way of determining children's competence. The concept of "evolving capacities", as set out in Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), addresses these dilemmas by introducing the idea that children should be able to exercise their rights as they acquire the capacity to do so, rather than when they reach a certain age. It requires parents or legal guardians to guide children appropriately and respect the extent to which they can exercise their rights for themselves.

The Review explores what the concept of evolving capacities means in practice. It looks at: the role of age in determining competence; other factors that contribute to children's evolving capacities; examples of where children's involvement in decisions is competency-based and how competence might be tested; how to balance respect for children's autonomy with their right to protection; and how, when and to what extent parents or legal guardians should support and encourage children to exercise their rights.

Gillian Calvert, the former NSW Children's Commissioner, offers evidence of age discrimination from Australia with regards to the labour market, where young people are paid lower wages than adults for doing the same job.

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=21049>

## ***Health and wellbeing***

### **Snapshot 2009: Children and young people in Queensland,** Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 12 October 2009

This statistical report, the seventh in the series, draws together data from a range of sources to provide a contemporary representation of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across Queensland. Specific chapters relate to: key statistics; population; family; health; deaths; child protection; early childhood education and care; education; and crime and justice. In addition, *Snapshot 2009* features three new chapters: age cohorts; lifestyle; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.

Positive findings identified in the report include:

- Recent rates of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect were declining, but the current rates are still higher than reported 10 years ago
- About nine in ten children are fully immunised by the appropriate coverage age
- Post-neonatal mortality rates are the lowest recorded in Queensland
- The majority of children and young people placed in the care of the state – that is, those in foster and residential care and youth detention – reported feeling safe and well treated in their situation, and
- Rates of youth offending for property offences are continuing to decrease.

The report also identifies measures of wellbeing for children which need further consideration and attention, including:

- Almost one-quarter (23%) of children awaiting surgery at 31 December 2008 were waiting longer than clinically recommended. However this represented just 4.4% of category one admissions which require admission within 30 days for a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly, to the point that it may become an emergency.
- The number of children and young people in alternative care continues to increase (6670 in 2008), and has more than doubled since 2002 (3257).
- Indigenous children were 4.8 times more likely to be in alternative care than the Queensland average (30.7 and 6.4 per 1000 respectively)
- The youth detention rate among Indigenous young people is almost ten times greater than the Queensland rate (313.5 and 32.3 per 100,000 respectively).
- Cyber bullying is emerging among children and young people, with one in twenty (5.3%) Queensland students reporting being frequently bullied via technology.
- About a quarter of those aged 16 to 17 years drink alcohol at levels that put them at risk of alcohol-related harm at least monthly
- The numbers of disciplinary absences at state schools has been increasing, with increases of 12.3% in the number of short suspensions and 22.0% in long suspensions in 2007–08.

*Continued...*

- More than one-quarter (26.9%) of children in Queensland were overweight (17.6%) or obese (9.3%) in 2007–08.

This report, as well as other Commission reports, is available at: [www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au](http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au)

The Commission is also conducting a reader feedback survey to gather information on the usefulness and relevance of *Snapshot*. If you are a *Snapshot* reader, please complete the 10-minute survey which you'll find via the link on the Commission's homepage: [www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au](http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au)

***State of Australia's Young People: a report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people***, Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D. & Griffiths, M. Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales for the Office for Youth, Australian Government October 2009

This report describes how young people aged 12–24 years in Australia are faring. The report aims to inform the Office for Youth as it develops a National Strategy for Young Australians. A summary of the key data includes:

#### **Demographic information**

- One in five Australians are aged 12–24 years and 28% of all households contain a young person.
- Indigenous people account for 3.6% of all 15–19-year-olds.
- One in five Australian young people were born overseas – mostly in Asia (6.6%) or Europe (2.6%).
- One in five young people in Australia speak a language other than English at home.

#### **Education and employment**

- Just over half of all Indigenous 15-19-year-olds are enrolled in education compared to 76% of non-Indigenous 15-19-year-olds.
- Only one-quarter of Indigenous 15–19-year-olds not currently attending school have completed Year 12.
- Only 31% of Indigenous teenagers were employed, compared to nearly 44% of non-Indigenous 15–19-year-olds.

#### **Technology use**

- Young people aged 8–17 years watched approximately 2 hours of television and an average of 1¼ hours online each day.
- Nine out of ten 17-year-old Australians used a mobile telephone, with young women more likely to have a mobile than young men.

#### **Social participation**

- Young people aged 12–25 years from diverse backgrounds – Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, low SES, disability, and out-of-home care – are not widely involved in decision-making processes, despite official support.

#### **Disability, physical and mental health**

- Almost a quarter of young people are either overweight or obese, and Indigenous young people are more likely to be obese than non-Indigenous youth.
- One in four young people 16–24 years (26%) have a mental disorder in a given year.

#### **Social issues**

- Teenagers aged 15-19 years have the highest hospitalisation rate for acute intoxication of all age groups.
- 32% of male 15 and 21% of female 15-17 year olds are drinking at levels which place them at risk.
- Just over one in ten young people aged 15–17 years reported smoking cigarettes or other tobacco products.
- Approximately one in five 16-year-olds and two-fifths of 18–24-year-olds had used illicit drugs.
- One in four Year 10 students and just over half of all Year 12 students reported having engaged in sexual intercourse. The authors note that risk taking and positive outcomes are not equally distributed among young people. Indigenous young people, young people from a low SES background, young people who are neither in work nor study, and young people with a disability are at risk of falling behind the broader population of young people in a range of areas.

The fact that key demographic characteristics increase young people's risks across a range of domains indicates that a cross-governmental, coordinated response to support these young people makes sense at a policy and practical level. Given the close relationship between educational attainment, employment and other social, health and substance use outcomes, investing in Australia's young people has important social and economic implications, not just for young people themselves, but for the country as a whole.

The full report is available at [www.youth.gov.au](http://www.youth.gov.au).

***Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia, April 2009***, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 28 October 2009

This publication presents results from the Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities survey. Over the study period there were approximately 2.7 million children aged 5 to 14 years in Australia within the scope of the survey. Key results include:

- An estimated 63% of children had played a sport outside of school hours which had been organised by a school, club or association. Participation in organised sport was highest among 9 to 11 years olds at 68%. Participation rates were higher for boys across all age groups compared with girls.

- 37% of children did not participate in any organised sport outside of school hours. A higher proportion of girls (44%) did not participate in organised sports than boys (30%).
- Just over a third (34%) of children were involved in at least one of four selected cultural activities - playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing and drama - outside of school hours. The most popular activity for boys was playing a musical instrument (19%), while for girls it was dancing (26%).
- 71% of children had attended, outside of school hours, a public library, a museum or art gallery, or a performing arts event at least once in the 12 months to April 2009. Children born overseas had a higher public library attendance rate (60%) compared with children born in Australia (53%). Queensland had the highest library attendance rate among all the states and territories at 60%, but the lowest attendance at performing arts events (29%).
- An estimated 26% of children did not take part in either organised sport or any of the selected cultural activities outside of school hours during the 12 month period.
- An estimated 79% of children had accessed the Internet either during or outside of school hours in 2009.
- 31% had a mobile phone. A higher proportion of girls had a mobile phone (33%) compared with boys (29%). Older children were most likely to have a mobile phone. Mobile phone ownership varied by family type, with children in one-parent families more likely to have a mobile phone (38%) than those in couple families (29%).
- Outside of school hours, children spent on average 17 hours watching television, DVDs and videos, and 11 hours doing other screen based activities in the two school weeks prior to interview. In comparison, children spent an average of 7 hours on reading for pleasure and homework, 6 hours riding skateboards, rollerblading or riding scooters, and 5 hours riding bikes and doing art and craft activities.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4901.0Apr%202009?OpenDocument>

***Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2007-08: report on the National Minimum Data Set***, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 23 October 2009

This document summarises data on publicly funded alcohol and other drug treatment services and their clients, including information about the types of drugs for which treatment is sought and the types of treatment provided. Data included in the report show that:

- Around 154,000 alcohol and other drug treatment episodes were provided during 2007-08 (an increase of about 7,000 episodes compared to 2006-07). Of these, 17,618 drug treatment episodes were provided to young people aged between 10 and 19 years in 2007-08.
- Younger clients (aged 10–19 years) most frequently reported cannabis as their principal drug of concern (43% of episodes) followed by alcohol (34%), amphetamines (8%) and heroin (3%).

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2009/mr20091023.cfm>

***Teenage drinking, alcohol availability and pricing: a cross-sectional study of risk and protective factors for alcohol-related harms in school children*** Bellis, M.A., Phillips-Howard, P.A., Hughes, K., Hughes, S., Cook, P.A., Morleo, M., Hannon, K., Smallthwaite, L. & Jones, L. BMC Public Health 9:380 9 October 2009.

This study examines drinking habits and associated harms in 15-16 year olds and explore how this can inform public health advice on child drinking. An opportunistic survey of 15-16 year olds (n=9,833) in North West England was undertaken to determine alcohol consumption patterns, drink types consumed, drinking locations, methods of access and harms encountered.

Results suggest that drinkers experiencing violence when drunk (28.8%), alcohol-related regretted sex (12.5%) forgetting things (45.3%) and drinking in public places (35.8%) increased with drinking frequency, binge frequency and units consumed per week. However, at similar levels of consumption, experiencing any negative alcohol-related outcome was lower in those whose parents provided alcohol.

Drunken violence was disproportionately associated with being male and greater deprivation while regretted sex and forgetting things after drinking were associated with being female. Consuming cheaper alcohol was related to experiencing violence when drunk, forgetting things after drinking and drinking in public places.

The authors conclude that while there is no safe level of alcohol consumption for 15-16 year olds, the promotion of abstinence may push children into accessing drink outside family environments and contribute to higher risks of harm. Strategies to reduce alcohol-related harms in children should ensure bingeing is avoided entirely, address the excessively low cost of many alcohol products and tackle the ease with which it can be accessed, especially outside of supervised environments

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/9/380/abstract>

***How Young People are Faring 2009*** Foundation for Young Australians 8 October 2009

*How Young People are Faring 2009* reports on the learning and work situation of young Australians. This year's report focuses on the global economic downturn and the subsequent impact on young people's aspirations, employment opportunities and education pathways.

*Continued...*

This report shows that there has been a sharp rise in the rate of 'youth disengagement' from work and study. It suggests that the proportion of teenagers not learning or earning full-time has jumped from 13.4% a year ago to 16.4%, the highest level since the recession of the early 1990s.

The report also highlights that:

- the rate of unemployment among teenagers who were not in full-time education has risen from 12.2% in 2008 to 18.5% in 2009, one of the largest annual increases for teenagers over the past two decades.
- the proportion of teenagers not in full-time education or employment varies widely across states and territories, with the ACT having the lowest rate (7.6%) followed by Victoria (13.6%), NSW (15.5%), Tasmania (16.8%), Western Australia (17%), South Australia (18.2%), Queensland (20.5%) and Northern Territory (22.2%).
- Queensland and Victoria recorded the greatest increases between 2008 and 2009 in percentages of teenagers not earning or learning.
- the last 12 months has seen reduced rates of entry into full-time work for school leavers.
- those young people living in the wealthiest areas are three times more likely to gain a university degree by the age of 24 than those in the poorest areas.
- females are nearly twice as likely as males to complete a university degree by the age of 23.

The study was commissioned by the Foundation for Young Australians and prepared by the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Melbourne.

<http://www.fya.org.au/hypaf-2009/#more-2447>

***Violent and antisocial behaviours among young adolescents in Australian communities: an analysis of risk and protective factors***, produced by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute for ARACY October 2009

This report forms part of the first phase of ARACY's "Preventing Youth Violence" project, which seeks to mobilise action across sectors and disciplines in developing evidence-based collaborative strategies to reduce violent and antisocial behaviour in young people. The project is directed at young people aged 10-14 when major changes in brain development provide a potent opportunity for effective early intervention. The report identifies factors that increase or reduce the likelihood of young people engaging in violent and antisocial behaviour.

The analysis is based on survey data of more than 8000 10-14 year old students in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia collected as part of the Healthy Neighbourhoods Project. The analysis confirms that programs to prevent youth violence were more likely to be effective if they started in primary school and were sustained as children moved through their adolescence. A range of risk factors at both an individual level and in the child's social environment significantly increased the likelihood that the child would also have recently consumed alcohol as well as engaging in violent and antisocial behaviour.

The study findings reinforce the need to implement strategies that reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors in the early adolescent years.

[http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=preventing\\_youth\\_violence](http://www.aracy.org.au/index.cfm?pageName=preventing_youth_violence)

***In their own words: Insights into the concerns of young Australians***, Mission Australia, 21 October 2009

In 2008 Mission Australia conducted its seventh annual *National survey of young Australians* with over 45,000 young people aged 11-24 years. The survey aimed to identify the important and emerging issues for young people through a series of questions on what they value, their issues of concern, where they turn for advice and support and who they admire.

Around half of the surveys were from young people aged between 11 and 14 years, a further 47% were from those aged 15 to 19 years. Just under 1,000 were from young adults aged 20 to 24 years.

Respondents ranked issues that concerned them from the following list of options:

- |                           |                                    |   |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| • Body image (26.3 %)     | • Bullying/emotional abuse (22.6%) | • The environment (18.4%)                           |
| • Drugs (26.0%)           | • Physical/sexual abuse (22.6%)    | • Depression (17.8%)                                |
| • Family conflict (25.9%) | • Alcohol (20.9%)                  | • Self harm (13.7%)                                 |
| • Suicide (24.6%)         | • Coping with stress (20.4%)       | • Discrimination (12.6%)                            |
| • Personal safety (22.9%) | • School or study problems (18.6%) | • Sexuality-relationships, health, identity( 12.2%) |

Young people's clear identification of the links between various issues should serve to sharpen efforts to support them in a holistic way – whether this is at home, school, in the workplace or through other more formal health, community and employment services. The call from one respondent to find the 'root issue and begin to fix the problem as a whole', provides a clear guiding principle to inform government, community and other initiatives aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of young people.

[http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/cat\\_view/34-social-policy-reports](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/cat_view/34-social-policy-reports)

**Australian social trends: Children who are overweight or obese**, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 24 September 2009

This report documents issues associated with children who are overweight or obese and highlights increases in childhood obesity due to the consumption of foods high in fat and sugars and less time spent on physical activity. Obesity not only has significant health and social impacts, but also economic impacts. In 2008, the total annual cost of obesity for children and adults in Australia, including health system costs, productivity and carers costs, was estimated to be around \$58 billion.

In 2007-8 one-quarter of all Australian children aged 5-17 years were overweight or obese, an increase by four percentage points from 1995. The obesity rate increased from 5% in 1995 to 8% in 2007-8 with the proportion overweight children remaining around 17%.

Between 1995 and 2007-8 the proportion of boys who were obese doubled from 5 to 10%, however, there was no change in the proportion of boys who were overweight. For girls, on the other hand, the obesity rate remained unchanged at 6%. There was an increase in the proportion of girls in the 13-17 years age group who were overweight, up from 12% in 1995 to 20% in 2007-08. Children living in the areas of greatest relative disadvantage had higher rates of being overweight and obese.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Sep+2009>

**Asthma in Australian Children: Findings from Growing up in Australia, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 14 October 2009

This report presents findings about asthma and wheezing illness in infants (first year of life) and in kindergarten children (fifth year of life) who were followed over two years in the national Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. A summary of the findings include:

- The prevalence of asthma in Australian children is amongst the highest in the world.
- Asthma or wheeze during the first three years of life was more common among those who: were boys, had older siblings, attended child care, were born at an early gestational age, were admitted to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit after birth; or whose mothers had asthma, were relatively young, or smoked during pregnancy.
- Infants who were breastfed had a lower risk of having asthma or wheeze during this time.
- Asthma in kindergarten-aged children was more common among those who: were living in remote or very remote areas and had food or other allergies. Children who had wheeze or asthma in their fifth year were more likely than other children to be hospitalised, to attend an emergency department, and to visit a general practitioner (GP) over the next two years, and were also more likely to be overweight or obese two years later.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10771>

**A Proposed National Strategy on Body Image**, made by the National Advisory Group on Body Image, 27 October 2009

The Minister for Youth, Kate Ellis, has accepted an advisory report to help the Australian Government tackle negative body image.

The Proposed National Strategy on Body Image, which includes a voluntary Industry Code of Conduct, was developed by the National Advisory Group on Body Image which was established earlier this year.

The report encourages advertisers, the media and the fashion industry to promote more positive body image messages. It includes a *Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image* which recommends using healthy weight models, realistic and natural images of people and disclosure when images of people have been digitally manipulated. The report also recommends building resilience in young people through a focus on peer interactions, parenting, and the role of schools and community groups.

<http://www.youth.gov.au/bodyimage.html>

**Newborn and Child Survival in Australia** Save the Children 2 October 2009

This document reviews and summarises reports on newborn and child survival in Australia to examine the causes of deaths of children under five years of age. The report reveals significant concerns in relation to Indigenous children under five. Key data highlighted in the report include:

- Australia ranks poorly in terms of infant and under-five mortality rates compared to other OECD countries, largely due to the high number of Indigenous infant deaths.
- Indigenous children aged five and under are three times more likely to die than non-Indigenous children due to factors such as poor nutrition and housing and limited access to health care services.
- The mortality rate for Indigenous infants (aged 0-12 months) is 12.5 per 1,000 live births compared to the non-Indigenous rate of 4.3.
- Infant and child mortality rates for children living in remote/very remote locations are nearly double the rate of children living in major cities.
- Infant deaths account for 85% of all deaths of children aged five and under in Australia.

*Continued...*

- Indigenous infant deaths accounted for one-fifth of all infant deaths in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory from 2002-2006.
- Indigenous infants are nine times more likely to die from respiratory conditions and four times more likely to die from injuries than non-Indigenous infants.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers are twice as likely to give birth to a low birth weight baby as non-Indigenous mothers.
- About 20% of Indigenous mothers are teenagers compared to about 4% of non Indigenous mothers. Teenagers living in remote and very remote areas (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are almost five times more likely to give birth than teenagers living in cities.

The report explores the reasons for infant and child mortality, with a particular focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. It calls for more comprehensive data on infant and child health in Australia to enable more effective funding, development and targeting of policies and programs.

The findings come as Save the Children launched its Survive to Five campaign, which calls for a worldwide doubling of paediatric health spending by 2015.

<http://www.savethechildren.org.au/media-centre/media-listing.html>

### ***Australian social trends: Work, Life and Family Balance, Australian Bureau of Statistics 24 September 2009***

This document reports that in Australia in 2007 there were 1.5 million couple families with children and about 360,000 lone parent families with children. The most common arrangement for couple families with children was for both parents to work (62% of couple families).

- For couple families with young children it was more common for only one parent to work full-time, with mothers less likely to be in paid work.
- Both parents had access to paid maternity/paternity leave in 26% of working couple families
- In 2007, 83% of couple families who had young children (aged four years and under) used some form of child care where both parents were working. Almost all employed lone parents with a young child used some form of child care.
- The most commonly used sources of child care for working couple families with young children were a child's grandparent(s) (43%) and long day-care centres (38%), followed by family day-care centres (12%).
- Employed lone parents with young children who used child care commonly used long day-care centres (57%). About 40% used the child's grandparent(s) to provide at least some of the care.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features50Sep+2009>

### ***Social Inclusion / Exclusion***

**Poverty in Queensland 2009 Report**, Report undertaken by the University of Queensland Social Research Centre (UQSRC) for the Queensland Council of Social Service Inc (QCOSS), October 2009

This report presents an overview of the dimensions of poverty including data showing that 10.6% of Queenslanders are living in poverty and that people with a disability and Indigenous people are more likely to live in poverty. The report identifies a number of groups in Queensland that are more vulnerable to poverty than the rest of the population, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Indigenous people are over-represented in the lowest levels of household income – with 40% in the lowest income bracket - twice that of the non-Indigenous population – at 19%).
- People living with a disability
- People who are unemployed or employed casually or part-time
- People with lower levels of educational attainment
- Single parent households and lone person households
- People who are renting
- Homeless people
- People living in rural, regional or remote areas.

Jobless households with children under 15 years reported experiencing more financial stress than those with employed adults. For example, 86% of jobless one parent families with children under 15 years indicated that they were unable to raise \$2,000 within a week if something important arose, compared to 25 percent of households with one or more adults employed adults. Regardless of whether or not a household contained employed adults, a higher proportion of single parent families experienced financial stress compared to couple families.

<http://www.qcross.org.au/Article.aspx?type=submission&id=6393>

**The tyranny of distance? Carers in regional and remote areas of Australia**, Edwards, B., Gray, M., Baxter, J. & Hunter, B. Prepared for Carers Australia by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2009

This report aims to: document the geographic spread of carers; examine the ability of carers to access services and how this varies according to geographic remoteness; document the social, health and economic wellbeing of carers according to geographic remoteness; and investigate the impact of drought on carers.

Key findings of relevance to Queensland and/or young carers (aged between 15 and 24) include:

- Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory were the states with the most carers (all age groups) living in remote areas.
- Compared to non-carers, carers in outer regional and remote areas reported difficulties accessing services.
- Australia-wide, 7.6% of carers were aged 15–24 years.
- The age profile in remote areas was slightly younger and in very remote areas was much younger.
- In very remote areas there was a larger percentage of young carers who were Indigenous.

The report recommends that unpaid family carers in rural and remote areas of Australia have better access to appropriate support and services.

<http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/?/national/article/view/1478>

**Children in Immigrant Families in Eight Affluent Countries: Their family, national and international context**, UNICEF, August 2009 (released 22 October 2009)

This document presents a statistical portrayal of children in immigrant families, drawing on research conducted in eight advanced industrialized countries - Australia, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The study provides detailed information on the situation of these children over a broad range of dimensions. These include: family composition, the educational background and working status of parents, housing conditions, school and labour market participation and poverty status of children. Statistics are broken down and presented by region and GDP level of the country of origin.

The findings indicate areas of success in the social inclusion and civic integration of children in immigrant families in different countries. They also highlight areas in which the circumstances of the children, particularly those from low and middle-income countries, call for improvement.

Information about children in immigrant families in Australia includes:

- In 2005, Australia was ranked 11 in terms of having the largest number of immigrants, representing 20.3% of the total population.
- Immigrant children account for 33% of the overall child population in Australia.
- The top 10 countries of origin for children in immigrant families in Australia are: Europe, New Zealand, South East and South Central Asia, Other Europe, East Asia, Viet Nam, Africa, The Philippines, Other Oceania and Italy.
- Poverty rates are higher among children in immigrant families than among children in native-born families, by 6–7 per cent in Australia.
- Childcare and preschool providers experience challenges in communicating with parents from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Educational outcomes at age 15 are not statistically different among children in immigrant families and children in native-born families. However, smaller scale studies have found that children in families in some immigrant groups suffer from racism practised by teachers and other students, suggesting the need for new studies of school achievement that focus on specific immigrant origins.
- Overall levels of mental illness among children in immigrant families are similar to or lower than levels among other children. Children in immigrant families show higher crime rates than those in the general population.

[http://unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/ii\\_immig\\_families.pdf](http://unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/ii_immig_families.pdf)

## ***Media and communications***

**Online protection guidelines** October 2009

The United Nations International Telecommunications Union has launched a blueprint for child online protection, drawn up jointly by welfare groups, regulators, law enforcement officials and the industry, that will be updated every year. The blueprint includes Guidelines for:

- Children
- Parents, Guardians and Educators
- Industry, and
- Policy Makers.

<http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop/guidelines/index.html>

**Young people and technology**, Helen McGrath RMIT School of Education for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation.

This literature review informs the development of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation's Cybersafety and Wellbeing Initiative. Cyberbullying, sexual predation, accessing inappropriate content, being coerced into sending sexually suggestive images, and identity fraud are some of the cyberspace risks facing young people today. Key information contained in the literature review demonstrates that:

- approximately 10% of Australian students in years 4-9 have experienced cyberbullying.
- a number of children and young people will be targeted by an online predator or paedophile each year.
- 'sexting' (where nude or sexual images are sent as picture messages via mobile phones) is on the rise among young people, with most not thinking about the future consequences.
- many young people share their username and password with friends, and can find their user accounts misused when the friendship turns sour.
- children can be particularly vulnerable to marketing offers they 'sign up' to that result in a torrent of spam, or ongoing charges for the downloads they can't control.
- parents and teachers are often too unfamiliar with cyberspace to offer credible advice to young people about the risks online and how to avoid them.

<http://www.amf.org.au/News.aspx?ID=6>

## Resources

Kids Helpline has launched its new website at [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au). The new site offers a safe, fun and interactive place for kids and young people to explore issues that are important to them. Features of the new site include:

- age specific 'micro-sites' targeting the needs of different age groups
- a specific section for 'Grownups' which includes research, reports and a service contact database
- a moderated discussion forum for teenagers
- 'hot topics' on common problems and concerns for kids and young people
- stories from kids and young people who have experienced and overcome challenges in their lives
- an interactive online poll
- a more user friendly gateway to our counselling services.

## Events/conferences

**For Our Children: Ampe Anwernekenheke conference**, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), Alice Springs 27-29 July 2010

The 2010 'For Our Children; Ampe Anwernekenheke' conference will build on the success of the 2007 For Our Children conference held in Adelaide. It is estimated 600 to 700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care leaders, practitioners, policy makers, researchers and government representatives from around Australia will attend the conference.

Organisations and individuals are sought to present workshops and sessions. Please see the web link below for details.

[http://www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/default\\_news\\_resources.cfm?loadref=31](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/default_news_resources.cfm?loadref=31)

**The 2nd National Siblings Australia 'Creating Connections' conference**, Siblings Australia, Adelaide 19-20 November 2009.

Siblings Australia celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2009, and over that time has developed a national and international reputation for its work with families and providers in supporting siblings of people with special needs. Siblings Australia acknowledges and recognises the needs of siblings; connects them with other siblings and people who can provide support, and explores ways to develop their resilience.

With the theme of 'Creating Connections', the conference will provide an opportunity for delegates to connect and explore the ways in which we work with and support children and families affected by disability, chronic illness and mental illness. Families and professionals will be able to share experiences; learn about the latest research developments and consider the future of sibling support programs.

<http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/siblings09/index.html>

## Media Releases/speeches

**Positive trends in Indigenous school attendance**, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs with Queensland Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Desley Boyle 30th September 2009

The latest Family Responsibilities Commission quarterly report and the quarterly report on Key Indicators in Queensland's Discrete Indigenous Communities, which were tabled on 30 September 2009 in the Queensland Parliament, show the following improvements in school attendance:

- Aurukun: Term 2 2009: 63.2% Term 2 2008: 37.9%
- Coen: Term 2 2009: 93.6% Term 2 2008: 96.8%
- Hope Vale: Term 2 2009: 86.9% Term 2 2008: 87.6%
- Mossman Gorge: Term 2 2009: 81.6% Term 2 2008: 60.9%

The Cape York Welfare Reform Trial is a partnership between the Queensland and Australian Governments, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and the four trial communities to tackle school attendance, drug and alcohol abuse, health, child safety, economic development and housing. The Family Responsibilities Commission Quarterly Reports are available at <http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/government/>

[http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/school\\_attendance\\_30sept09.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/school_attendance_30sept09.htm)

**KidsMatter Mental Health Project Receives Extra Funding**, The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, 5 October 2009

The KidsMatter Primary initiative, which aims to promote mental health, prevent mental illness and initiate early intervention among primary school students, is being funded with \$12.2 million to extend its initial pilot roll-out at 101 schools. KidsMatter is a whole-of-school approach with four components – a positive school community; social and emotional learning for students; parenting support and education and early intervention for students with mental health difficulties. An evaluation of the program has found positive educational and mental health outcomes. The Rudd Government is also committing \$6.5 million over three years to develop and pilot a KidsMatter project for the early childhood sector.

KidsMatter Primary and KidsMatter Early Childhood are being conducted in collaboration between *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, which is contributing funding of \$3.5 million, the Australian Psychological Society, Principals Australia and Early Childhood Australia.

During the 2009 and 2010 school years, the Department of Health and Ageing and the KidsMatter Primary partners will progress the implementation of KidsMatter Primary in up to 400 schools nationwide.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr09-nr-nr171.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2009&mth=10>

**\$500,000 each year to support young Australians**, The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, 7 October, 2009

A new Federal funding program to support the development and participation of young Australians, aged 12 to 25 has been launched. The Australian Government will provide \$500 000 a year to eligible non-government, not-for-profit organisations through the Youth Development and Support Program.

The program will fund community-based projects aimed at helping young people in their transition to independence and adulthood. Eligible groups are invited to apply for grants up to \$75 000 towards projects that focus on the participation and social inclusion of young people. Applications for funding close on 4 November 2009.

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/ellis/media/releases/pages/article\\_091007\\_133632.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/ellis/media/releases/pages/article_091007_133632.aspx)

**\$34 million for Indigenous youth leadership scholarships**, The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Social Inclusion, Deputy Prime Minister, 13 October 2009

New partnership brokers to deliver the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program from 2010 have been announced. The Rudd Government is investing \$34 million in the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program over the next three years to help close the gap in Indigenous education.

The eight organisations that have been selected are: Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership Development, Townsville Catholic Education, The Smith Family, Yalari Limited, Madalah Limited, Dubbo College Senior Campus, Presbyterian Ladies College Perth and MADEC Australia-Mildura. These organisations will work with schools, businesses and Indigenous communities to coordinate scholarships for more than 700 Indigenous students over the next three years.

It is expected that in 2012, 1.5% of all Indigenous secondary students will receive a scholarship through the program. The scholarships will support students to attend a school or university that has been approved as high performing for Indigenous students. During their studies, the students will receive mentoring to develop skills to take on future

leadership roles within their communities and beyond.

Since its inception in 2006, the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program has provided scholarships for 364 secondary and 77 tertiary students.

Further information about the Indigenous Youth Leadership program can be found at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Schooling/Programs/Pages/IYLP.aspx>.

The full media release can be found at

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_091013\\_160146.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091013_160146.aspx)

**Developing national standards to protect vulnerable children**, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 14 October 2009

The Australian Government has begun work on developing national standards to make sure children who cannot live with their parents receive quality, safe and secure care, no matter which state or territory they live in. Consultancy group KPMG will review current standards, policies and practices in out-of-home care to develop best practice national standards. The development of the national standards will include:

- a review of current standards, policies and practices in out-of-home care across Australia, as well as a survey of international best practice;
- national consultations with government and non-government service providers, children, young people, their families and carers who have experienced out-of-home care; and
- recommending a single set of national standards.

KPMG will also develop an agreed evidence tool to verify, review and monitor progress against the agreed national standards. The final report will be presented for consideration to state and territory Community Services' Ministers in mid 2010.

[http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/stds\\_to\\_protect\\_children\\_14oct2009.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/stds_to_protect_children_14oct2009.htm)

**Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for early childhood Settings**, The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing and The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, and Minister for Sport, 22 October 2009

New Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for early childhood Settings have been launched. The *Get Up & Grow* guidelines provide information to support healthy behaviour in children aged five years and younger attending early childhood education and care settings, including centre-based care, family day care and preschools. The guidelines, a 2007 Federal election commitment, form part of the Government's *Plan for Early Childhood and Plan for Tackling Obesity*.

The guidelines are evidence-based and support a consistent, national approach to childhood nutrition and physical activity. They are consistent with Australian nutrition and physical activity recommendations for young children and include books, posters, stickers, flyers and a CD-ROM.

Copies of the packs, or individual items in the packs, can be ordered from the Department of Health and Ageing's website at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr09-nr-nr181.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2009&mth=10>

**QLD Premier announces \$500,000 in Indigenous literacy funding for Far North Queensland, Cape York, and Torres Strait**, The Honourable Anna Bligh, Premier and Minister for the Arts, October 27, 2009

\$500,000 in new funding has been granted for the Reading to Children initiative in Far North Queensland, Cape York and Torres Strait communities.

The funding of \$125,685 per annum over four years will enable The Smith Family to extend the delivery of its early childhood literacy program, Let's Read, from 11 to 14 regions across Queensland.

The funding will be used to recruit and train volunteers such as grandparents in the communities to read to young children.

<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=67092>