



Valuing Children
INITIATIVE

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Media Release

CHILDREN SEEN - BUT ARE THEY REALLY HEARD?

The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 (the Survey) has found that 80% of Australians are concerned about the health and happiness of future generations of Australian children.

'Childhood obesity and mental health were highlighted as being particular issues of concern,' Linda Savage, the Convenor of the Valuing Children Initiative said.

'In Australia today approximately one in four children are overweight, or obese, and as a result for the first time children in affluent countries like Australia, are predicted to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, because of the chronic diseases that result.'

'In 2013-2014 almost one in seven, 4-17 year olds were assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months.'

The Survey also found less than one in five believe that Australia is a safer place today than when they grew up.

With two Royal Commissions currently examining the abuse and mistreatment of children, Ms Savage said this result was probably not surprising.

'And before we comfort ourselves with the belief that these are yesterday's problems, it should be noted that the Australian Institute of Family Studies reported in 2013-2014 that 40,844 children were the subject of substantiated reports of neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, representing a 31% increase from 2009-2010.'

The Survey also found that less than half of those surveyed believe that all children in Australia have a fair and equal opportunity to flourish and to maximise their potential.

Nearly 50% believe governments give too little consideration to children.

The Valuing Children Initiative has recently written to all State MPs urging them to reinvigorate the role they play in ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of children and urging them to give children's rights and needs greater priority.

This includes the creation of a Ministerial portfolio for Children and Future Generations.

'A dedicated Minister is needed to ensure children are at the forefront of considerations, to develop a State wide plan with an inspiring vision to ensure all children experience the safe, supportive and caring childhood they deserve and have a right to, and to establish and oversee a subcommittee of Cabinet that includes all Ministers with responsibilities for children.'

This would play a role in countering fragmentation, and short term and crisis driven responses which are particularly detrimental to children. It would also be a tangible sign of the value of all Western Australia's children, Ms Savage said.

The Valuing Children Initiative has also urged the instigation of a rigorous and transparent process to ensure that all policy, legislative and decision making processes actively considers the impact on children and future generations. This should include the views of children whenever possible.

'This would ensure that children, who cannot vote and are excluded from influencing the political process, have their interests explicitly considered. Considering the impact on children and future generations should be integral to sound decision making.'

The Valuing Children Initiative has also called for funding of community awareness activities to inspire Australians to value all children, to understand that a child's wellbeing is the responsibility of the entire community, and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations.

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The Valuing Children Initiative is an ambitious project that seeks to inspire Australians to value all children, understand that a child's wellbeing is the responsibility of the entire community, and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations.

[Download](#) the Survey, or visit www.valuingchildreninitiative.com.au for further information.

Prescott, S. 2015 'Origins: Early –life solutions to the modern health crisis.' Crawley, Western Australia. UWAP, p.39

Lawrence, D. et al. (2015) The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Department of Health. Canberra.

<https://www.health.gov.au/internet/publishing.nsf/Content/9DA8CA21306FE6EDCA257E2700016945/4File/child2.pdf>

Australian Institute of Family Studies: Child abuse and neglect statistics. July 2015

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-abuse-neglect-and-statistics>

A Synopsis of The Valuing Children Initiative Benchmark Survey: 2016 – Part A October 2016.

<http://valuingchildreninitiative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ARE-CHILDREN-AT-THE-FOREFRONT-OF-OUR-CONSIDERATIONS-A-synopsis-of-the-Valuing-Children-Initiative-Benchmark-Survey-2016-Part-A.pdf>