

unicef 

AUSTRALIA

for every child



UNICEF Australia Domestic Impact Report 2024

Creating an Australia where every child is
healthy, educated, protected, respected
and involved in planning their future



I can play
with my friends.

I can play
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Acknowledgement of Country

UNICEF Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country of the land and communities in which we and our partners work throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, and to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge First Nations children and young people, who are the leaders of tomorrow.

Making Australia an even greater place to grow up, for every child

Foreword by Nicole Breeze, Chief Advocate for Children and Director of Australian Programs

For most children, Australia is one of the greatest places in the world to grow up. However, this is not the case for every child.

Growing numbers of children across Australia are facing challenges. Inequality is widening with children in regional and remote communities and First Nations children continuing to face additional barriers. The cost-of-living crisis is increasing financial pressures on families across Australia, making it harder for parents and care givers to pay for essentials for their children – such as food, learning supplies and health services.

Entrenched, systematic barriers in the child protection and youth justice systems continue to negatively impact the rights of children – especially those already experiencing disadvantage. Several, tragic events this year have shone a light on these issues and underlined the need for Australia to better meet its obligations under international Human Rights Law, with respect to some of the most vulnerable children.

In the digital domain, children's safety online has been making

headlines across the country, with governments committing to plans and policies to ban children from social media. Whilst more needs to be done to enhance children's safety online in an increasingly digital world where our online and offline realities are ever more entwined, this ban alone will not solve online harms. We need solutions that will reduce risks and keep children safe in this rapidly evolving context.

2024 has once again seen record breaking temperatures and disasters becoming more frequent – globally and here at home in Australia. It is children and young people – who are hit hardest by the impacts of climate change and disasters – who continue to pay the highest price.

Every child in Australia should be healthy, educated, protected, respected and involved in decisions that impact their lives. In 2024, UNICEF Australia has continued to be a strong voice for children, promoting their rights through advocacy, research, youth engagement, and cross sectoral partnerships.

This year, our influence on government policy has led to important wins for children. We have continued to see success from our advocacy in digital policy for children, securing reforms to the

Privacy Act and a commitment to develop a Children's Online Privacy Code. We have also continued to call for the inclusion of children and young people in climate change decision making, which contributed to the Federal Government's announcement of a new, Youth Advisory Council for International Climate Change this year. Australia's new national Early Years Strategy, launched in May, is a major step forward and we have been proud to assist in its development, alongside others in the sector.

Supporting children and young people to have a say in their lives and futures remains a critical priority for UNICEF Australia. This year, over 2,000 children and young people were consulted on key issues that matter to them.

We have continued to provide thought leadership to help guide decision makers in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors through 11 new evidence and research reports on children, young people and families. This includes groundbreaking evidence on the costs and unique needs of children in climate-induced disasters.

Our engagement with the private sector through Family Friendly Workplaces continues to deepen as we seek to improve children's wellbeing and development by making it easier for parents and carers to balance work and family life. Over 1.1 million Australians now work for a certified family friendly employer.

None of this work would have been possible without the sustained collaboration with our partners and the support of our generous donors. Thank you for helping us to make children and young people a priority in Australia.



2024 highlights

Creating better policies and stronger investments for children



8

government policies, practices or legislation influenced



\$3 million

committed by the Australian Government to better support children and young people following advocacy by UNICEF Australia

Raising the voices of children and young people



2,636

children and young people consulted on issues that affect them



368,814

children engaged in school-based activities



47

engagements by influential young leaders with government leaders and decision makers

Shaping the conversation about children in Australia



11

new publications to guide better policies and programs for children and young people



Sustained media coverage

calling for change for children, with an estimated reach of 250 million +

Family friendly workplaces



1.1million+

Australians now work for a certified family-inclusive employer

Protecting, preparing and prioritising children affected by climate change and disasters



Co-developed the world's first child-centred climate indicators, measuring climate change impacts and action from their perspective

How we work in Australia

UNICEF Australia is working to create an Australia where every child is healthy, educated, protected, respected and participating in planning their future.

In 2024, UNICEF Australia had the following strategic areas of focus:



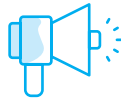
To achieve results for children we:



Advocate with Governments to address inequality and chronic child rights issues in Australia. We work in partnership with all governments across Australia to strengthen policies and drive positive system change for children.



Partner for impact to address inequality and disadvantage. Together with our partners we highlight critical gaps and needs of the most vulnerable children in Australia and help drive greater investment in strategies that work. We collaborate with community organisations, NGO's, researchers, academics and the private sector to drive change at scale.



Connect with children and young people and elevate their voices so they can have a say in policies and programs that shape their lives now and into the future.



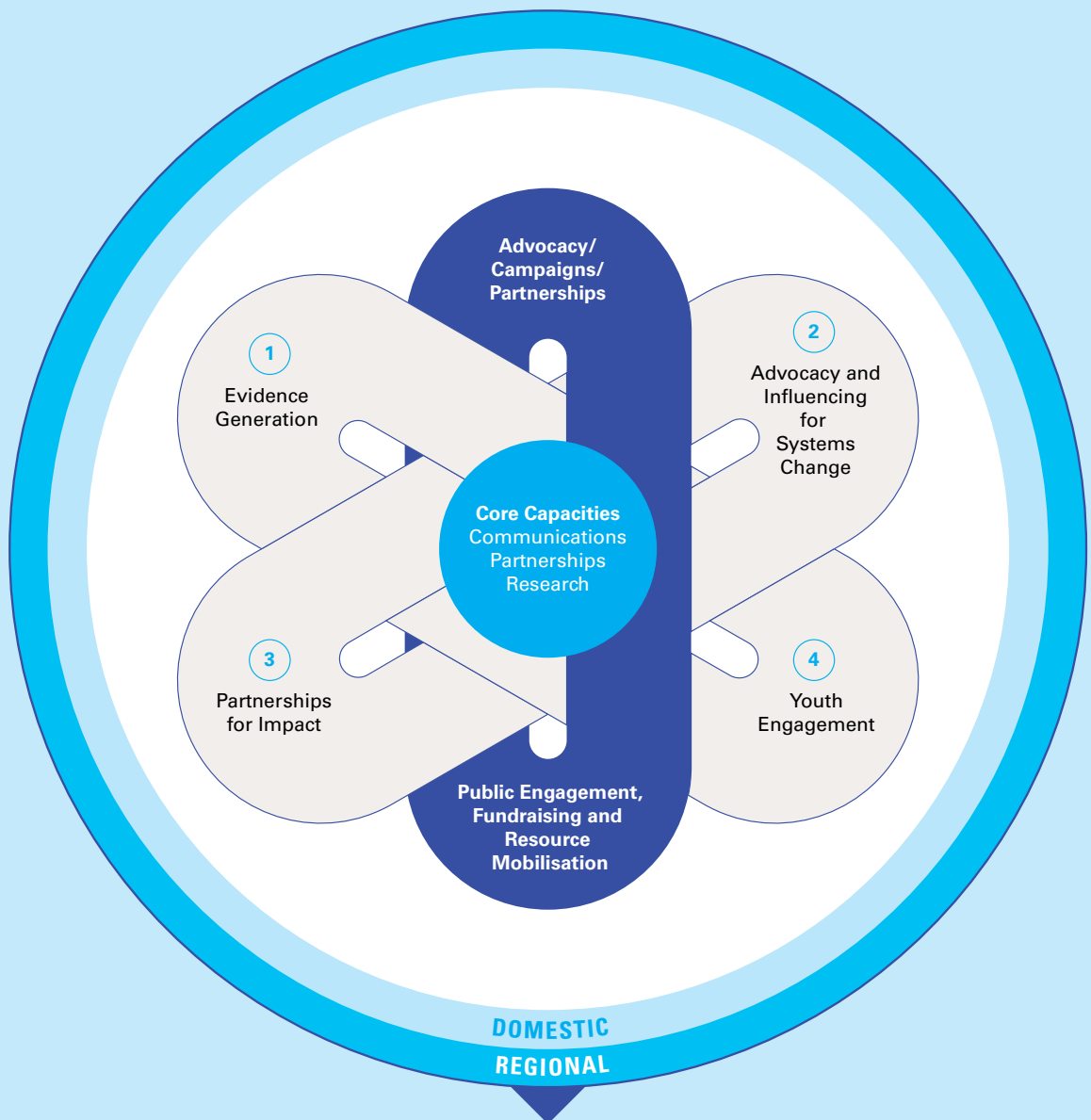
Create ground-breaking knowledge, data and evidence on the situation for children and young people in Australia, and use this evidence to inform and guide national decision-making to improve children's wellbeing.



Shaping the public conversation and debates about children through our research and insights and as a strong voice in the media.

Our work is anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we strive to shape a better world for all children in Australia, no matter what.

How we work to create positive and lasting change for children



RESULTS FOR EVERY CHILD

Our theory of change

This year, UNICEF Australia has made significant steps toward our theory of change; our roadmap for improving the lives of children in Australia, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Involved and influential young leaders



2,636 children and young people consulted on issues that are important to them

Adoption of policy, practice, legislation and budgets that support children's rights



8 government policies, practices or legislation influenced

Evidence-based policy and programs for children



11 new publications to guide better policies and programs for children and young people

Direct benefits for children, families and communities



Over 1.1 million Australians now work for a certified Family Friendly employer

Increased public support for children



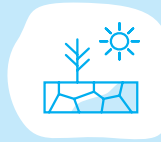
10 x increase in the reach of our advocacy messaging in the media on 2023*



368,814 children engaged in school-based activities



\$3 million committed by the Australian Government to better support children and young people following advocacy by UNICEF Australia



Australia's first study estimating the economic cost of children's exposure to disasters in Australia



500 parents and caregivers supported on issues registering their child's birth



\$1.38 million contributed by Australian organisations, individuals and government agencies to directly support UNICEF Australia's work for children

*our messages in the media calling for change for children have had an estimated reach of 250+ million this year



Young Ambassador, Jewoseydi on the We Won't Cop
It panel at COP 29. Image supplied by DCCEEW



Climate change and disasters

UNICEF Australia is working to make sure children are prepared, protected and prioritised in the face of the climate crisis and increasing climate disasters. We are generating research and evidence to inform better systems and services; putting children at the heart of climate policies and investments; and empowering children and young people to prepare for the future and lead climate action.

On an average year, 1 in 6 Australian children and young people are impacted by disasters

Children and young people are more likely to experience disasters if they are in regional areas, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or are First Nations children

Children and young people exposed to disasters are on average 4.3 per cent less likely to finish year 12, and between 1.3 and 4.5 per cent more likely to experience psychological distress¹

Australia is highly vulnerable to climate change, with record-high temperatures and increasingly frequent climate-related disasters impacting all states and territories. It is children who have the most to lose, as they are physically and psychologically more vulnerable to air pollution, extreme weather and disasters than adults. With their futures ahead of them, decisions made today will have profound and lasting impacts on their lives. However, they are often excluded in planning for the future.

UNICEF Australia is working to ensure children and young people's needs are better understood and prioritised in climate and disaster planning, preparedness and response. Children and young people must have a voice and participate in decisions that impact them.

Key achievements in 2024

Measuring the impact of disasters on children and young people

In February 2024, UNICEF Australia and Deloitte Access Economics released *The Impact of Disasters on Children and Young People* report; the first ever study to estimate the economic cost of children's exposure to disasters in Australia. The report assessed the impacts of disasters on children's lost learning, psychological distress and homelessness, and found an average of **\$3.1 billion in annual costs** between 2014 and 2020.

To address these impacts, the report recommended:

- A nationally consistent approach to supporting children and young people to prepare for and respond to disasters.
- A risk-informed approach to disaster recovery and resilience-building for children and young people.
- Disaster funding that is sensitive to the unique needs and priorities of children and young people.
- Investment in further research, including the need for Australia to support a national Children's Climate Risk Index.

The report was launched with significant media coverage, and meetings were held with the offices of the federal Ministers for Emergency Management, Climate Change, Youth, and Social Services as well as the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA).



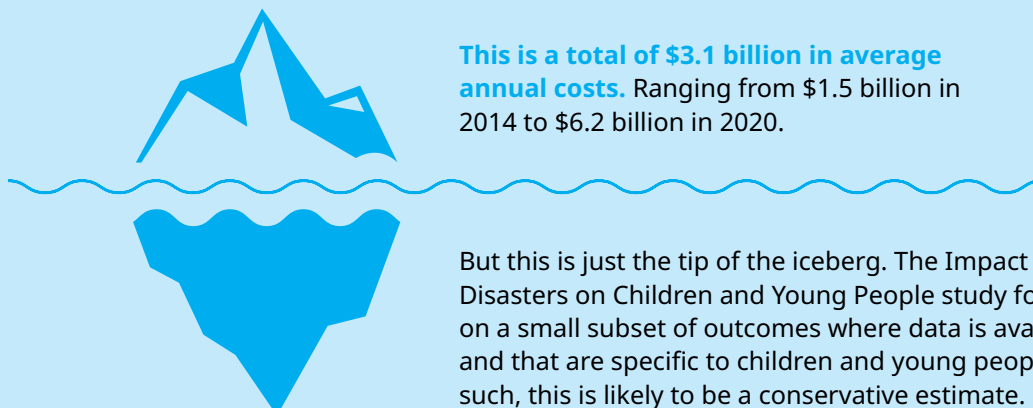
Children and young people are 4.2% less likely to finish year 12 later in life leading to **\$2,921 million** in lost lifetime earnings.



Children and young people are 1.3% to 4.5% more likely to experience psychological distress leading to **\$162 million** in healthcare costs.



Children and young people are 0.01% more likely to experience homelessness leading to **\$0.7 million** in emergency services.



Fitzroy Crossing Children's Needs Assessment

In January 2023, Fitzroy Valley in remote Western Australia was impacted by record-breaking floods. Families were separated and displaced from their homes, food supplies were cut off, and the bridge connecting the communities was destroyed.

In response, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre (MWRC), through its partnership with Royal Far West, invited UNICEF Australia to undertake a post-flood Needs Assessment.

This is the third in a series of Needs Assessments by UNICEF Australia and Royal Far West, and the first to explore the unique experiences of remote Aboriginal communities impacted by a disaster. The findings were analysed using the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) framework, with supervision and guidance from Professor Pat Dudgeon and her team.

It found:

- Aboriginal children and families in the Fitzroy Valley have significant pre-existing, unmet social and emotional wellbeing needs.
- The social and emotional wellbeing of children and families was impacted by cumulative, compounding factors resulting from the flood and emergency response.
- The official emergency response effort had some positive characteristics, but fell short of community expectations in many ways.
- Community resilience and leadership made a significant difference to the effectiveness of the flood response and recovery.



CASE STUDY

Launching the Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment report was launched at Parliament House in August 2024, with a key address from the newly appointed Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy.

The event brought together Members of Parliament, Senators, government agency representatives, sector leaders and community representatives, and was followed by briefings with key decision makers.

The discussions underscored the need to embed the needs of children and communities in disaster planning, policies and investment, and the importance of community involvement and leadership in disaster resilience, response and recovery.



Top: MWRC CEO Emily Carter (AM) and Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, who shared the experience of her own community in disasters. ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Bennett

Left: MWRC, UNICEF Australia, Royal Far West and Elizabeth Elliott (AM, FAHMS, FRSN) at the Parliament House launch. ©UNICEF Australia/supplied



©UNICEF/2024/Wong

“We deserve to live in a thriving world” – Child-Centred Indicators for Climate Change

In April 2024, UNICEF Australia and the Young and Resilient Research Centre (Y&R) at Western Sydney University launched the world's first child-centred climate indicators. This practical tool, and its youth-friendly version, measure the impact of climate change and climate action from the perspective of children and young people.

The 47 climate indicators were developed in consultation with 10–18-year-olds from three climate-affected regions (Northern Rivers, Upper Hunter and Western Sydney), using Y&R's unique, youth-centred co-research methods. Children and

young people shared their views on their climate priorities, how they want to participate in climate action, who they see as responsible, and how prepared their communities are to deal with climate change.

By measuring climate policy and action against these indicators, governments, decision makers, organisations and communities can now assess how climate change is impacting children and young people over time, and how climate action at all levels can be made more child-sensitive. UNICEF Australia's partnership with Y&R was awarded a Western Sydney University 'Research Excellence through Industry Collaboration or Partnership' award for excellence in sustainability and impact.

“ We have the most at stake, and yet we do not have a stake. We are left out of climate action planning. We watch on while decisions about our lives are made but we do not get a seat at the table. ”

YEHANSA,
CO-RESEARCHER.

Local Conference of Youth and the road to COP29

Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) brings together young people to explore and discuss climate change and its impact on them. LCOYs are national conferences, and are held around the world, with inputs collated to form both National Children and Youth Statements on Climate Change and the Global Youth Climate Statement, which is submitted to the Conference of Parties (COP) climate negotiations each year.

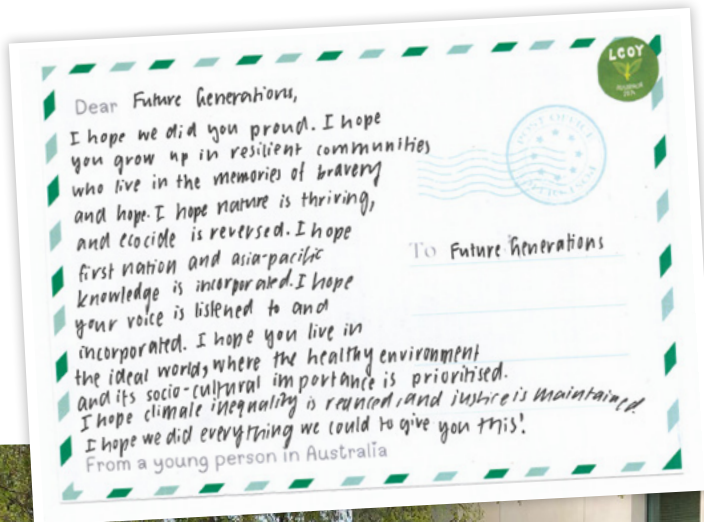
In 2024, we supported Australia's LCOY in partnership with Plan International Australia and Australian Youth for International Climate Engagement (AYFICE) Australia. The LCOY brought together 190 children and young people at seven face-to-face consultations designed and led by young people, including UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors. These consultations informed the development of the National Child and Youth Statement on Climate Change, which calls for:

- Greater ambition from the Federal Government to mitigate the impacts of climate change and an urgent transition to renewable energy.
- Wealthier nations including Australia to pay their fair share of climate financing.
- First Nations and Pacific knowledge and practices to be embedded in climate action.
- Better mechanisms for meaningful inclusion in domestic and international climate decision-making, including children and young people,

marginalised groups like women and girls, LGBTIQ+ individuals and people of colour.

- More holistic and engaging climate education included in the Australian curriculum.

The Statement was launched in September, with young changemakers travelling to Canberra to speak with decision makers about climate issues that are important to them and their peers. It was also presented at COP29 in Azerbaijan in an effort to influence global youth policy discussions.



A postcard created by young people at LCOY events.



LCOY participants, UNICEF Australia staff members and Josh Wilson MP, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy ©UNICEF Australia/Supplied

Child-sensitive climate policies

UNICEF is a leading actor in influencing countries around the world to adopt child-sensitive climate policies and positions. Here in Australia, we are working closely with our global colleagues to translate this position to a local context. This includes advocating for children to be included in national climate policies like the National Adaptation Plan and Australia's Nationally Determined Contributions, and influencing the Australian Government's positions in relevant international negotiations.

This year, UNICEF Australia has worked closely with the Australian Government and relevant departments through regular meetings and bilaterals, including at events like the Bonn Climate Change Conference, and COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.



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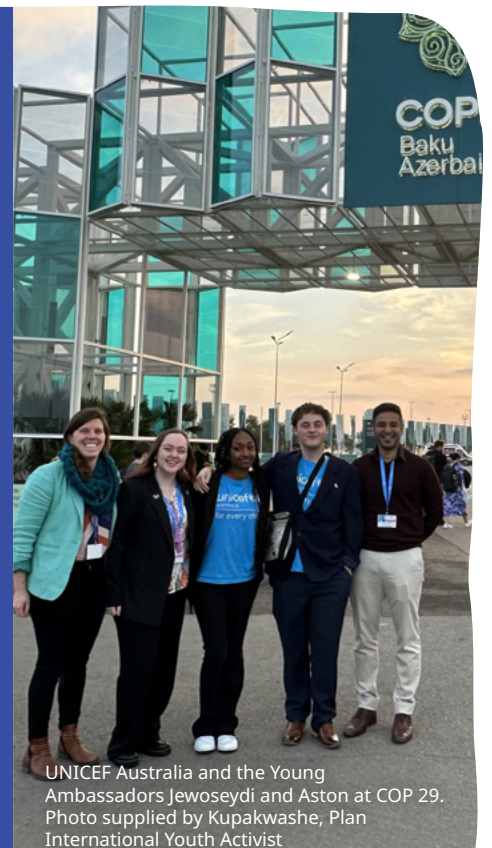
CASE STUDY

UNICEF Australia at COP 29

UNICEF Australia staff and two Young Ambassadors attended COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan in November. We met with key decision makers about the impact climate change is having on children and young people and the role they can – and should – play in planning for the future.

UNICEF Australia co-hosted an event at the Australian Pavilion titled 'We Won't COP It: Youth Leadership in Climate Action'. This event shone a light on the experiences of young people involved in the 2024 Australian LCOY, and explored the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to child and youth engagement in climate policy.

Australia plays a key role in global climate negotiations, including those on adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance. The federal government remains committed to child and youth participation in climate policymaking, and provided funding and support for the two UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors to attend COP 29.



UNICEF Australia and the Young Ambassadors Jewoseydi and Aston at COP 29. Photo supplied by Kupakwashe, Plan International Youth Activist



© UNICEF Australia/2024/Andres



Universal birth registration

Birth registration is an essential first step to accessing life-changing services and support. UNICEF Australia believes every child in Australia should have their births registered as early as possible so they can access and fully enjoy their rights throughout their lives. However, thousands of babies born in Australia each year do not have their births registered.

We are consulting with communities to understand the challenges they are facing in registering their babies' births, working with partners to publish new data on this issue, launching public campaigns to build understanding, and providing a roadmap for closing the birth registration gap across Australia.

UNICEF Australia research has found:

12,600 births are unregistered each year, on average

75,000 Australian babies were not registered within their first year of life between 2017 and 2022

Babies experiencing disadvantage or living in remote areas, First Nations babies, and babies born to mothers under 25 years old are more likely to have their births registered after their first birthday²

Key achievements in 2024

Birth registration is one of a child's first rights. It is their passport to protection, establishing their existence under the law and allowing for full participation in society over the course of their life. With birth registration comes access to a birth certificate, without which individuals can face difficulties enrolling in early learning and school; accessing health services and social security; gaining employment, a driver's licence or a tax file number; joining sporting clubs; or even opening a bank account.

For the period 2017-2022



75,000+

Australian babies were not registered one year after birth

The resulting barriers and disadvantages can also transcend generations, as parents without birth certificates struggle to provide the documentation needed to register their own children. As such, the impacts of not having registered a birth are cumulative and far reaching for individuals, families, communities and policymakers.

Our landmark Certify Hope campaign is working to raise awareness of the issue of birth registrations in Australia and to provide a roadmap for systemic change.

Key achievements

- Generating new research, data and a strong evidence base on rates and impacts of delayed birth registration in Australia, and the families who are most affected.
- The 'Certify Hope - Rights from the Start' report and policy brief, which brought together new and existing evidence on this issue and featured a roadmap for governments to universal birth registration in Australia. This report was widely circulated with key decision makers.
- The Certify Hope campaign, raised awareness of the issue with Australian families, reaching over 2.9 million people across the country. We also convened a cross sector webinar aiming to raise awareness and influence government policies and practices to address barriers to achieving universal birth registration at a national level.
- Establishing and strengthening relationships with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages and community organisations to collaborate on ways to improve birth registration rates.
- Advocacy with the Federal Government to increase their understanding of delayed birth registration rates in Australia, emphasising the importance of birth registration and certificates in ensuring children can access early learning and care, and highlighting this as an issue to address in their Early Years Strategy outcomes framework.



Pathfinders, UNICEF Australia staff and the Queensland Department of Births Deaths and Marriages at a birth registration event in Logan, Queensland ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Moran

Community Engagement

We have continued to work closely with our community partner, Pathfinders, who run the National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program and in 2024 we travelled to Kyogle (NSW) and Logan (QLD) to hear, learn and understand the barriers and impacts local families face when registering their children's births. The lived experiences of these and other communities that Pathfinders work with provided a human lens to support the data in our Certify Hope–Rights from the Start report, our public campaign and our conversations with government.



©UNICEF Australia/2024/Moran

UNICEF Australia is calling for:

①

Improved accessibility and affordability of birth registration and certificates

②

More resources for Births, Deaths and Marriages registries

③

Strengthened community-based services so they can provide support

CASE STUDY

Meet Monique

Monique, a young mother from Queensland, was trying to get her daughter's birth registered for nearly ten years but found the process difficult in the absence of the father's ID or her own birth certificate.

Presenting to sector and government decision makers at the 'Certify Hope – Rights from the Start' report webinar launch, Monique spoke about the challenges she faced when registering her children's births and the impacts this has had on their access to education and other important services.

“It's been a real struggle to get any of their birth certificates and it's held us back with childcare. I haven't been able to get my son into most of our local early education centres and my youngest daughter has been unable to attend one too. To be able to get a birth certificate, you need a birth certificate.”

Thanks to the additional support offered by UNICEF Australia's community partner, Pathfinders, Monique has been able to register her children's births and receive her own birth certificate. We look forward to continued strong engagement with the government on this important process.



© UNICEF Australia/Supplied



UNICEF Australia's survey of 1000+ young Australians aged 15-17 found:

.....
81% of social media users say it has a positive influence on their lives
.....

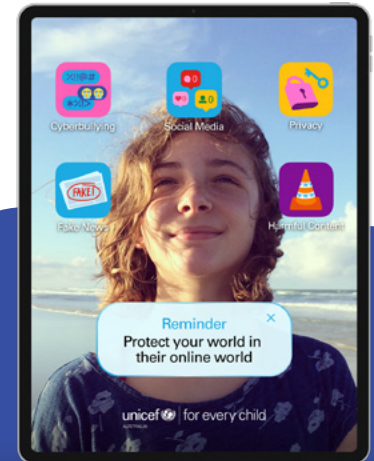
82% say they will take action when seeing someone being bullied online
.....

39% have seen self-harm content online with 61% of them taking action against it
.....

69% have used a generative AI chatbot like ChatGPT⁴

Digital safety and wellbeing

UNICEF Australia has made online safety and the digital wellbeing of all children and young people a key priority. With the knowledge that every single Australian child will be online by age 12³, we are committed to improving their digital environments and safety through our research, advocacy, public campaigns and importantly, by listening to and amplifying young people's perspectives on the issues affecting them online.



UNICEF's global research tells us Australia is highly advanced in many aspects of child online safety⁵, and there is great momentum for ongoing improvement. However, with a constantly evolving digital environment, the importance of vigilance and initiatives to improve the online world for every Australian child cannot be overstated.

With a range of research, media, partnership and advocacy initiatives, we have continued to see success on a variety of areas relevant to digital policy for children in Australia. Leveraging UNICEF's strong international research, we have localised it for the Australian context and used it to drive change across several initiatives.

Key achievements

- Launching our digital wellbeing partnership with the Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child at Old Parliament House, which secured interest in our research and delivered a combined media reach over 17 million people. The event was attended by the Minister for Communications, The Hon Michelle Rowland MP.
- Successful advocacy on reforms to the Privacy Act, securing Federal Government commitment to develop a Children's Online Privacy Code, and \$3 million in funding to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner to develop this Code.

- Securing a Telstra Foundation Young and Connected Fund grant to expand our digital wellbeing work, including delivering a youth survey on children's experiences and behaviours online, co-designing media literacy resources and delivering a public campaign.
- Using high impact media and communications to increase public discourse about the unique needs of children in digital environments.
- Providing a platform for young people to speak publicly about this issue and elevating the perspectives of children and young people through sector consultations, policy submissions and media commentary.
- Launching our [Protect your world in their online world](#) campaign to give parents and caregivers the tools and resources to help keep their families safe online.

“I think that in the future, the online world will be what brings us together. Through the internet we find friends and connect with family.”

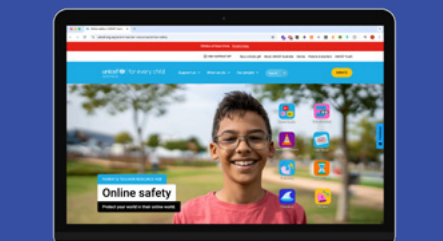
UNICEF AUSTRALIA SURVEY PARTICIPANT

CASE STUDY

Protect your world in their online world

The Protect Your World in Their Online World social media campaign was launched in April and has reached over 2.4 million Australians. Targeting parents and caregivers, it was designed to help them navigate the challenges of their children's online environments with a range of helpful resources.

The campaign reached 2.4 million people and resulted in 45,000 visits to our Online Safety webpages covering pressing issues such as positive social media use, managing privacy, managing cyberbullying and harmful content, amongst others.





World Children's Day - UNICEF Australia Minute of Loudness
©UNICEF Australia/2024/Andres



Child and youth participation

There are 5.5 million children under the age of 18 in Australia, and every one of them has a right to have a say on issues that impact their lives.

It is our goal that all young Australians can actively participate in civil society, be heard on issues which are important to them as well as contribute to and drive social change at scale.

Only **13%** of children and young people feel leaders in government listen to their views

.....
78.9% of young Australians want to be involved in decision making with government⁶

Children and young people play an invaluable role in improving their communities, schools, towns and country. Their energy, new ideas and ways of problem solving offer an incredible opportunity to unlock a safer, cleaner and more equitable Australia for the future.

However, a recent NSW Advocate for Children and Young People study shows that children and young people often feel invisible, forgotten, helpless and unable to influence the world around them.

By encouraging and supporting children to get involved, and to create and drive solutions for the future, we are working to strengthen their role in making positive social, political and economic change – now and into the future.

Young Ambassadors

The Young Ambassador Program trains youth leaders from across Australia on policy processes, advocacy campaigning and how to drive change at scale with decision makers. Young Ambassadors lead consultations with children and young people to understand their unique needs, concerns and hopes for the future.

In 2024, UNICEF Australia's Young Ambassador Program had had nine amazing Young Ambassadors, including Cyril (QLD), Peta (NSW), Luke (ACT), Jewoseydi (Vic), Jorja (Tas), Denzel (SA), Aston (SA), Abbi (WA) and Jules (NT).

The Young Ambassadors were part of 49 political, educational and sector events which included running youth

consultations, speaking on panels, writing media pieces, speaking at schools and UN Youth conferences, developing their leadership skills through running youth consultations through the Local Conference of Youth, and having their views heard at COP29 in Azerbaijan. They advocated passionately for climate change, digital wellbeing and First Nations social justice through these activities.

The Young Ambassadors' participation in the UNICEF programs at SXSW Sydney was a highlight, with Luke speaking on an inspiring climate panel and Peta discussing the urgent need for action and the powerful voices of young people in addressing the climate crisis.



UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors ©UNICEF Australia/2023/Labade

School engagement

Game Changer Challenge - UNICEF Australia collaborated with the NSW Education Department for the award-winning Game Changer Challenge (GCC), a design thinking competition open to public schools across the state. This challenge focuses on finding solutions to complex, real-world problems through classroom learning. This year, UNICEF Australia set the challenge theme as "Make life better for all without harming the planet."

Students submitted video applications and out of 420 participating schools, 20 team finalists were flown to Sydney to present their projects. Students from Mudgee Public School won with their "Sustainable Sister Schools" project, demonstrating climate resilience and child centric solutions at the heart of a program of cross-cultural exchange and fundraising for schools in low-and-middle income countries.

Child rights and disasters UNICEF Challenge: Now in its second year, we ran the child rights and disasters UNICEF Challenge

with independent schools in NSW. The Challenge saw students tasked with protecting a chosen child right should disaster strike. Students came up with innovative approaches, like wearable devices to keep children calm and discoverable should they get lost in the emergency, games simulating disaster scenarios, filtration systems to clean stormwater and many more. The initiative was a finalist in the partnership program category of the 2024 Australian Education Excellence Awards.

Minecraft Eco Detectives Game: The launch of this new environmental education game provided teachers across Australia and New Zealand with access to our climate and environment teaching resources to extend student learning around climate change and the environment.

“UNICEF helped with our understanding of funding from government and how all that works.”

GAME CHANGER CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT



Denzel and Jules
©UNICEF Australia/2023/Labade

CASE STUDY

We are thrilled to share that Young Ambassadors, Denzel and Jules, were nominated as Young Australian of the Year. When reflecting on their time as Young Ambassadors Denzel shared that his highlights included "delivering a speech in Canberra, talking to decision makers on how climate change is impacting us and sharing my experiences as a First Nations person." Jules shared that coming from a more remote area, she appreciated the voice that being a Young Ambassador gave her and said that "being part of this program has made me want to ensure young people from the Northern Territory have platforms like this where they are listened to."



© Photos supplied by Matt Hudson

World Children's Day

Every year, World's Children Day is celebrated on 20 November, marking the date the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted.

This year, we reached out to all Australian schools and children's community organisations to celebrate through our established "Minute of Loudness" campaign, which invites all children to get LOUD on the day about issues which matter to them.

Our core theme this year was children's rights, and we provided learning resources and activities to encourage children to think about how children's rights can make Australia even better for every child to grow up in.

A record 623 schools signed up to our activations which included:

- Free learning resources, lesson plans and classroom activities from preschool to high school.
- Tips for teachers and educators on how to celebrate the big day in their schools.
- A fun competition for students to create a "chant" about child rights.

Over 153,000 children participated in our "Minute of Loudness" celebration, and the event was marked with media on children's news program, Behind the News.



World Children's Day - UNICEF Australia Minute of Loudness
©UNICEF Australia/2024/Andres

A MINUTE OF

LOUD- NESS



Inviting every child to celebrate
World Children's Day!

20 November 2024


for every child

AUSTRALIA

SXSW Sydney – Innovative spaces for engagement

As a festival dedicated to ideas, innovation, voices and culture, SXSW Sydney offers an incredible opportunity for young people to connect, learn and have their say about today’s challenges and tomorrow’s solutions.

This year, UNICEF Australia brought young people together at a range of SXSW events, including youth panels on philanthropy and climate change, and a youth-only Nxtwave Future Climate Lab. The Lab sought to amplify the voices of the next generation of thought leaders and innovators in shaping their climate future with a special focus on COP30 and COP31. The Lab brought together 40 young people including climate thought leaders in Australia, UNICEF Australia Young Ambassadors and young people from the region (Kiribati and Papua New Guinea). The ideas formed as part of the Lab have been included in our delegation to COP29 in Baku.

UNICEF Australia also achieved its goal of making SXSW Sydney more inclusive with a Youth Pass introduced in 2024 for under 25-year-olds, and a day focused on youth and innovation attended by high school and university students.



SXSW Peta main stage Young Ambassador, Peta with UNICEF Australia Innovation Lead, Zunilka. ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Wong



Youth panel on climate change. ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Wong



©UNICEF Australia/Supplied



Making children a national priority

UNICEF Australia strives to make children a national priority. Through our advocacy, research and reporting, public and civil society engagement, we call for closer attention on the issues that impact and matter to children and ensure their wellbeing – including child protection, youth justice, poverty and the impacts of cost-of-living crisis, and seeking to make Australian workplaces increasingly family friendly.

Nearly one in four Australians live in an early childcare desert, meaning there are more than twice as many children as early learning and childcare places⁷

First Nations children are more than ten times more likely to enter out-of-home care⁸

First Nations young people aged 10 to 17 were 29 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people aged 10 to 17 to be in detention⁹



Jason Clare, Minister for Education and Youth of Australia with UNICEF Australia's Nicole Breeze, Chief Advocate for Children, and Tony Stewart, Chief Executive Officer. ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Supplied

Every child in Australia should be valued, respected, supported, included and have their views taken seriously. Prioritising children's rights benefits all children and our society more broadly, but sadly, many children in Australia still lack these rights. UNICEF Australia is working to advance children's rights, including in the following areas:

Influencing the Early Years Strategy and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) reform in Australia

UNICEF Australia worked alongside others to influence the development of the Federal Government's Early Years Strategy which was launched in May 2024. Our key

recommendations focused on creating a truly universal early years system, embedding equity in the system, and providing consideration to workforce issues and wage increases for ECEC workers. UNICEF Australia's key advocacy points and recommendations were evident in the Productivity Commission's final report into ECEC.

The Australian Children's Wellbeing Index

The Australian Children's Wellbeing Index was developed in 2021 by UNICEF Australia and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). Aligned with The Nest framework, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF's global goals, the Australian Children's Wellbeing

Index provides Australia's first, holistic picture of how children are faring in different aspects of their lives, such as health, education, safety, rights, and participation.

Through the Australian Children's Wellbeing Index, we aim to set policy priorities and guide action to ensure Australia is an equitable place to grow up, and to improve outcomes for all Australian children.

This year, we launched the 'Empowering Young Minds: A review of Australian children and young people's learning' report with partners ARACY. This is the second in a series of papers on the Children's Wellbeing Index and provides a deep-dive into the Learning domain, including learning in the GenAI era.

“Developing (critical thinking skills) will only help young people engage with GenAI technology in a way that enhances their learning instead of hindering it.”

YOUNG AMBASSADOR, CYRIL, ON THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF GEN AI IN LEARNING.

Making Australia family friendly: The Family Friendly Workplace Program

We have a bold vision to make Australia family friendly and the best place to be a parent and raise a child. To do this we are asking Australian employers to make their workplaces family friendly by providing flexible, gender inclusive and wellbeing-focused policies and practices as well as childcare assistance. With the support of the Office for Women we are scaling our Family Friendly initiative to reach 500 organisations by 2025.

Key achievements in 2024:

- **Launch of the second National Working Families Survey Report** with over 6,000 Australian working families and caregivers participating. Key findings from this new data shows an increase in stress for parents and carers in balancing their career and their caring responsibilities. This increase is largely felt by women, who make up over 70 per cent of carers in Australia.
- **A growth in engagement of partners, with a total of 352 organisations** evaluated against the minimum National Work and Family Standards, which were created in 2021.



Tharani Jegatheeswaran, Partner at Deloitte Australia and UNICEF Australia Board Member at the National Working Families Report launch ©UNICEF Australia/2024/Bennett

CASE STUDY

Meet Chris

After Chris and his partner had their first child, Rafael (Raffy), in late 2022, he took ING's full paid parental leave offering of 14 weeks, including superannuation (now 20 weeks as of March 2024). At ING Australia, an accredited Family Friendly Workplace since 2021, all employees – regardless of gender – are encouraged to work flexibly under ING's FlexING approach, including paid parental leave and carer's leave.

Taking carer's leave allowed Chris to enjoy spending quality time with his new baby and for Chris to support his partner in the first few weeks of Raffy's life. Nearly a year later, Chris took his remaining paid parental leave and unpaid parental leave as his partner returned to work. Not only did it help his family save on childcare costs, but it made him a more confident father and strengthened the bond between him and his young child.

“ There was something special about us both having time off together with him. It is a real benefit and a bonus. I can also help with chores and hang up new pictures of our family. We can be a family unit, making things a bit easier. ”

CHRIS, FATHER OF ONE AND ING EMPLOYEE



© UNICEF Australia/Supplied

Defending the rights of children

Youth Justice - We continue to add UNICEF Australia's voice to a chorus of support calling for reform in youth justice in Australia, namely through our participation in the Raise the Age campaign, advocacy with state and territory governments, submissions and public communications through social media. The impact of this collective sector advocacy is starting to produce small gains in youth justice policy.

Most recently UNICEF Australia launched a public statement during National Child Protection Week calling for urgent youth justice reforms, and a statement on the Northern Territory Government's lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 10 years.

A National Plan for Children - UNICEF Australia has continued to collaborate with government to ensure children are a national policy priority, and that closer attention is paid to protracted issues like child protection, youth justice and poverty. We also want to see a greater role for young people in civic life and to create systematic opportunities for their voices to be heard.

The Blueprint for a National Plan for children developed with Save the Children Australia and 54 Reasons is a roadmap for a comprehensive plan for children and young people aged up to 18 in Australia. This Plan was shared with the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader and relevant ministers in September, and would:

- Establish clear outcomes and priorities for children's wellbeing.
- Unify existing strategies to create a cohesive approach centred on children and their needs.
- Ensure every child is given the support they need to thrive.

We look forward to working with the government on how we can implement this plan, improving outcomes for children and families across Australia.

Australia's International and Humanitarian Policy

Our Australian Programs team influences key decision makers here in Australia to improve children's lives everywhere. This includes helping to inform the policies and investment choices the Australian Government makes in international and humanitarian policy.

This year, we increased our focus on humanitarian advocacy by maintaining a close relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Foreign Minister's office, and through correspondence and various engagements.

Highlights for 2024:

- UNICEF received Australian Government funding for the crisis in Gaza to be

directed to WASH activities on the ground. We have continued to brief the government and share reports on the situation in Gaza, and held a briefing for MPs and staff at Parliament House in May 2024. We also shared information on risk mitigation and funding to inform the reversal of the Government's decision to cease funding to The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) early in 2024.

- We participated in sector events around World Humanitarian Day, building pressure through media and direct engagement for the Australian Government to step up its response to international humanitarian law violations in Gaza.
- We regularly briefed DFAT and relevant Ministers on the impact of humanitarian crises

on children, including in Sudan and Lebanon. This contributed to increased funding from the Australian Government.

- Following advocacy from UNICEF Australia, the Foreign Minister announced the Declaration on the Protection of Humanitarian Workers at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September. We were invited to contribute our expertise prior to the announcement through a pre-briefing session with the Minister's Office.
- We provided an informal submission and had ongoing discussions with DFAT leading on the newly released *Australia's Humanitarian Policy - making a difference for people in crisis*, working to ensure children were referenced in the policy and that it was made child-sensitive.



Shaping the public conversation as a voice for children

UNICEF Australia has contributed to shaping the public conversation about children this year in topics that include climate change, early years reform, online safety, making them a national priority, advancing birth registration, and family friendly policies.

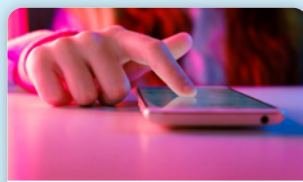
Driven by the skill of UNICEF Australia's media team, overall our content has been published by Australian media outlets with an estimated reach of over 250 million. Some examples include:



Fires and floods harm kids, costing \$6bn a year: report
[The West Australian](#)



Alarming content Australian teens are watching online revealed in new survey
[7NEWS](#)



Protect children in the digital world, don't prohibit them
[Canberra Times](#)



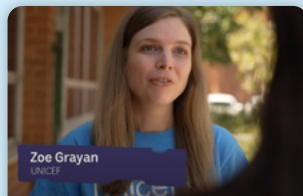
Working the problem - why are so many working parents still struggling with high levels of stress?
[Saturday Telegraph](#)



'Exactly what we need': Indigenous bodies welcome creation of children's commissioner
[The Guardian](#)



'Invisible' children: Unregistered births, stolen futures of Australia's most vulnerable
[news.com.au](#)



World Children's Day marks the date that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was introduced
[Behind The News](#)



Fitzroy flood trauma could scar a generation: UNICEF
[The Australian](#)



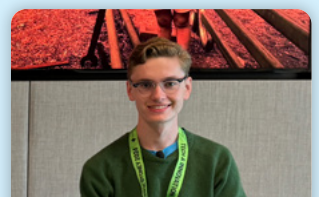
That oddly specific targeted ad you just saw isn't exactly harmless
[Canberra Times](#)



What Eddie's experience teaches us about the climate crisis
[The Guardian](#)



UNICEF looking for State ambassadors to have voices heard on world stage
[The West Australian](#)



Young Ambassador, Luke McNamara opinion piece on COP
[Canberra Times](#)

Our policy work



One of the ways UNICEF Australia helps to make change for children in Australia is through submissions to Parliamentary Committees, public statements and appearances at Senate Committees and inquiries on issues relating to child rights in Australia.

We made the following submissions this year:

1. [Submission to the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 Inquiry](#)
2. [Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system 2024](#)
3. [Inquiry into Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024](#)
4. [Submission to the National Strategy for Food Security in First Nations Communities](#)
5. [Submission to the National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Issues Paper](#)
6. [Submission to the Inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region](#)
7. [Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society](#)
8. [Submission to the Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021](#)
9. [Submission to the Online Safety \(Basic Online Safety Expectations\) Amendment Determination 2023 consultation](#)
10. [Submission to the Migration Amendment \(Removal and Other Measures\) Bill 2024 inquiry](#)
11. [2024-25 UNICEF Australia Pre-budget Submission](#)
12. [Submission to the Select Committee on Cost of Living](#)
13. [Submission on the Draft Industry Codes of Practice for the Online Industry \(Class 1C and Class 2 Material\)](#)
14. [Submission to the Online Safety Amendment \(Social Media Minimum Age\) Bill 2024](#)

UNICEF Australia's Chief Advocate for Children and Director of Australian Programs, Nicole Breeze, also gave evidence to the 'Senate Inquiry into Australia's response to the priorities of the Pacific Island Countries and the Pacific Region' in September.

Our publications

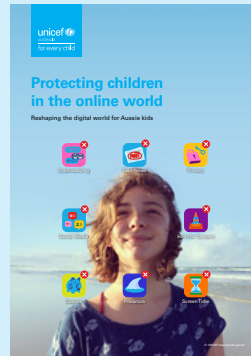
We create research and insights about children and young people to inform and guide decision makers. In 2024, UNICEF Australia and its partners released the following publications.



Empowering Young Minds: A review of Australian children and young people's learning



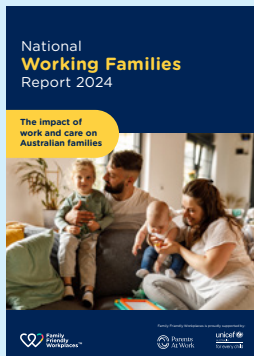
The impact of disasters on children and young people



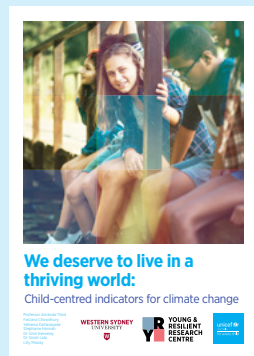
Protecting children in the online world: Reshaping the digital world for Aussie kids



Certify Hope - Rights from the start: Achieving universal birth registration in Australia



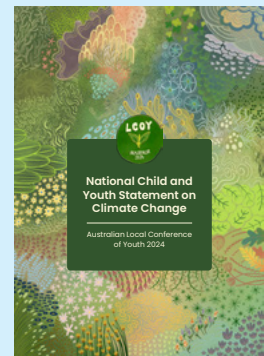
National Working Families Report 2024: The impact of work and care on Australian families



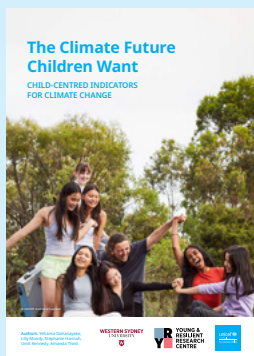
We deserve to live in a thriving world: Child-centred indicators for climate



Flood Response and Recovery in Fitzroy Crossing: Needs Assessment



National Child and Youth Statement on Climate Change Australian: Local Conference of Youth 2024



The Climate Future Children Want: Child-Centred Indicators for Climate Change (child friendly version)



The impact of disasters A Blueprint for a National Children's Plan: Let's make children a national priority in Australia people



Rapid Review of Child-Sensitive National Adaptation Plans

Thank you to our Partners and Supporters

With the support of the Australian public, our partners and collaborators, UNICEF Australia is able to make real change and impact for children and young people across the country.

Thank you to our community, academic and research, and private sector partnerships for working with us this year to make a difference for children and young people.



We would also like to thank the following major supporters of our work here in Australia:

- The Ian Potter Foundation
- Telstra Foundation
- Islamic Relief Australia
- The Office for Women
- Ikea
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- Howatson+Co

We would also like to thank Professor Elizabeth Elliott, AM, FAHMS, FRSN, for her technical advice, including on the Fitzroy Crossing Needs Assessment.

Endnotes

¹ Deloitte Access Economics and UNICEF Australia, "The Impact of Disasters on Children and Young People", 2024. <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/analysis/impact-disasters-on-children-young-people.html>

² UNICEF Australia, "Certify Hope - Rights from the start", 2024

³ Bravehearts, 2023

⁴ UNICEF Australia, "Protecting Children in the Online World", 2024.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Office for Youth, "Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make", 2024.

⁷ UNICEF Australia and ARACY – Empowering Young Minds: A Review of Australian Children and Young People's Learning – 2024.

⁸ Data as at 2021-22. Source SNAICC, "Family Matters Report 2023"

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Youth detention in population in Australia 2023". Note data is "on an average night in the June quarter 2023"

