

Making Australia a Better Place for Children

Strategy 2023-2025





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Healthy, Educated, Protected, Respected and Involved

UNICEF Australia is working to create an Australia where every child is healthy, educated, protected, respected and involved in planning their future. We will do this through:



Helping Governments to create stronger policies and investments



Catalysing and scaling local partnerships and collaborating across sectors for impact



Connecting to and collaborating with children and young people



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

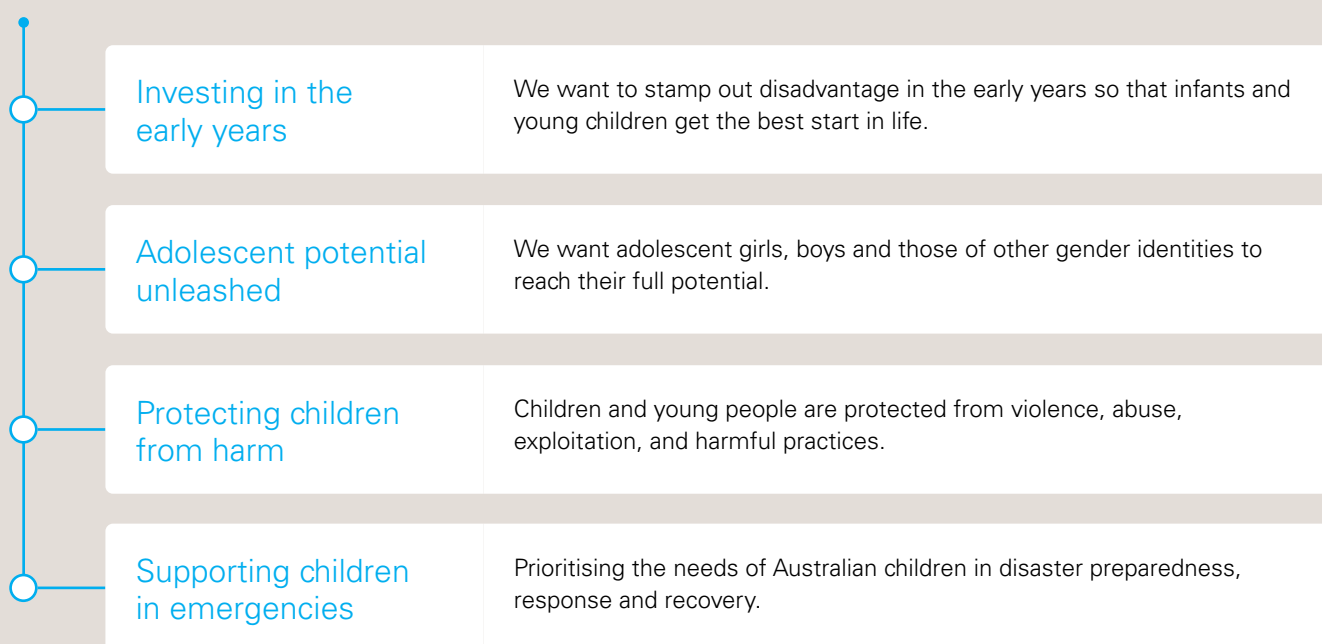


Engaging Australians to take action in support of children

By 2025, UNICEF Australia wants to profoundly influence policy, attitudes and behaviour to enhance the rights of children and young people in Australia. It will mean young people will have their voices heard, that UNICEF Australia will grow its presence as a leading voice for children, that Australians will be inspired to act in support of children; and that its mandate and expertise are enhanced and deepened by our partnerships and our collaboration.

Our three-year strategy aligns with UNICEF’s Global Advocacy Priorities which includes a focus on child survival and development, improving mental health, improving learning and tackling Climate Change.

This strategy also reflects our key thematic pillars which will help focus our efforts. These are:



This paper will outline UNICEF Australia’s strategy to improve outcomes for children over the next three years as we strive for our vision of an Australia where every child is healthy, educated, protected, respected and involved. This includes providing data and evidence through the Children’s Wellbeing Index so that we continue to publish data and advocate for change to decision makers and service providers.

SECTION 1

will outline the situation for children in Australia today and the challenges and opportunities that they will face tomorrow.

SECTION 2

will outline the principles upon which UNICEF Australia works and outlines our theory of change.

SECTION 3

will detail how UNICEF Australia will focus its resources and efforts and how it will leverage its unique strengths, to bring about lasting change.

SECTION 4

will explain our Partnerships for Impact and how, through partnerships we aim to contribute to direct outcomes for children and their communities while also driving systematic and lasting change.

SECTION 5

will underscore our goal to give children and young people a voice and a say in their future. Enabling leaders for today and tomorrow.

SECTION 1

Australian Children - Our Priorities

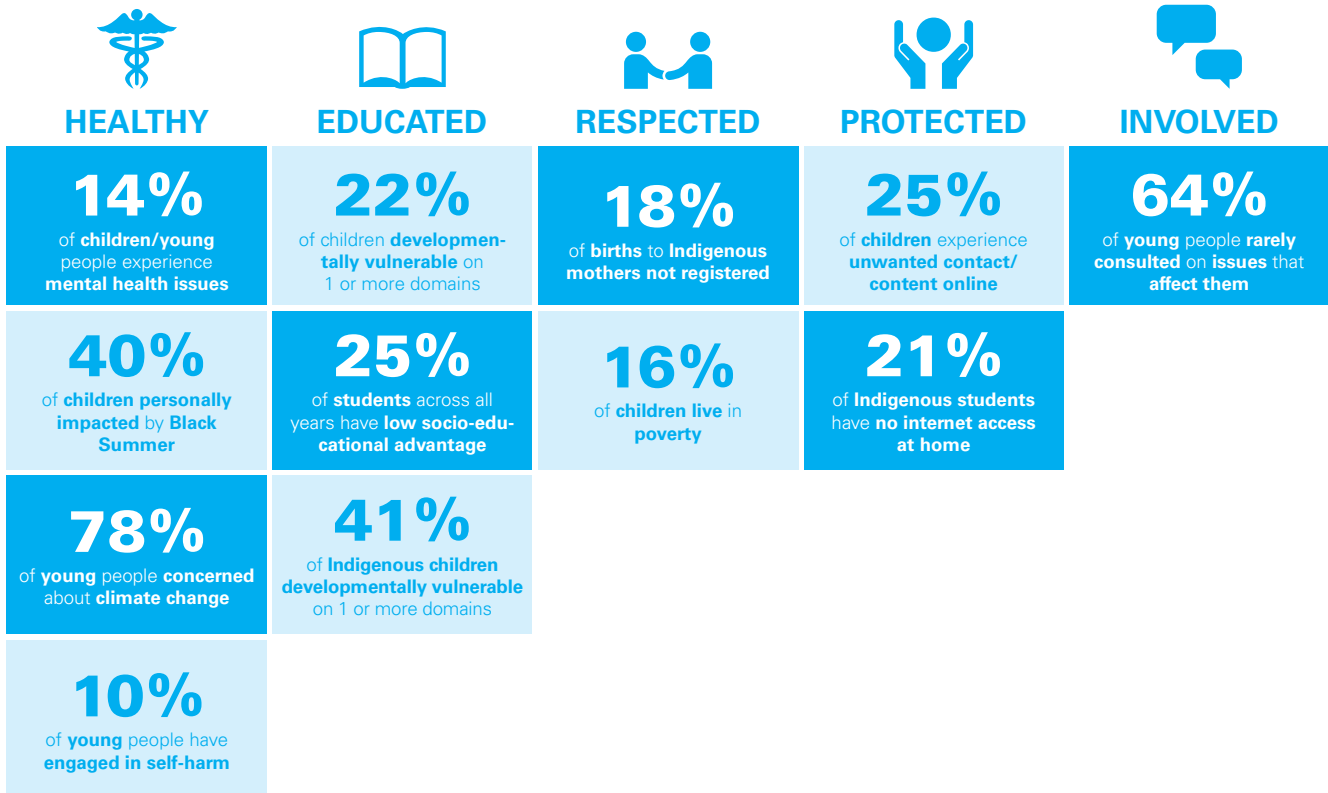
The situation for children in Australia

While for most, Australia is one of the best countries in the world to grow up, the rights and wellbeing of many children and young people are being negatively impacted in a variety of ways across many issues; these impacts are often hidden and would shock many Australians.

In Australia, **1 in 6 children live below the national poverty line**¹, some **62,300 children aged 0-14 receive specialist homeless services** and **174,000 children receive child protection services**.² **One in 6 girls report physical or sexual abuse before the age of 15**, that figure is **1 in 9 for boys**. **1 in 7 experience mental health issues** and **1 in 10 engage in self-harm**.

For First Nations children the situation is far worse - they are more than **ten times likely to enter out-of-home care** and **26 times more likely to enter youth detention**. Disadvantage and inequity are growing across Australia with the **highest 20% of incomes earning more than six times that of the lowest 20% of households**.

Children and young people in Australia today



¹ Poverty refers to the poverty line, as defined by individual countries. The poverty line in Australia is generally defined as 50 per cent of median household income. If someone was earning less than the below amounts (including a government income) in 2022, they were classed as below the poverty line: \$454 a week for a single person; \$725 for a sole parent with two children; and \$952 for a couple with two children. Source: Duncan A, 'Behind the Line: Poverty and disadvantage in Australia 2022', Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Focus on the States Series, #9, March 2022

² Link to UNICEF Australia's Child Rights Analysis

Child rights in Australia today

In September 2019, Australia's progress in accordance with its responsibilities as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was reviewed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Despite being a country where many opportunities exist for most children, the review highlighted several critical areas where progress has stalled and where the rights of some children in Australia are being compromised or are at risk. The Committee provided Australia with a range of recommendations ("Concluding Observations") to improve its performance in relation to children's rights.³

The Committee expressed concern about the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to face significant disadvantage across a range of domains relevant to their rights and wellbeing, including in health and education, discrimination, exposure to family violence, and over representation in child protection and youth justice systems.

The Concluding Observations (2019) also called for urgent measures to be taken in order to protect: children from violence, in alternative care, in relation to mental health, from environmental damage and climate change and in the administration of justice. It also called for the protection of child refugees and those seeking asylum and in situations of migration.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's "Children's Rights in Australia: A Scorecard" highlighted a number of critical issues that Australia needed to address.⁴ These included the fact Australia does not have a national plan, policy, legislation or budgeting process to support child rights in Australia.

Other critical issues included high rates of child deaths by suicide and significant inequality in health, education, justice and child protection outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. A 27% increase in reported child abuse and neglect and a 18% rise in the number of children in out-of-home-care were also flagged as issues for concern. Australia's policy of mandatory detention of unlawful non-citizens, including children and the low age (10 years) of criminal responsibilities were also issues Australia was asked to address.



“ There are immense challenges and there are opportunities to plan, innovate and prepare. ”

The challenges today that will impact tomorrow

In July this year Australia's science agency, the CSIRO, released a report into seven global megatrends which it warned would unleash a tidal wave of disruption over the next two decades.⁵ The report warned of a spike in volatile weather conditions and a surge in natural disasters due to climate change.

It warned of escalating health challenges with a heightened risk of infectious diseases and pathogens resistant to modern anti-biotics. Among its mega trends was also the growing digital divide in Australia which will potentially exacerbate inequality. "From resource scarcity to drug resistant superbugs, disrupted global trade, and an increasingly unstable climate threatening our health and way of life – these are just some of the challenges we face," the CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Larry Marshall said on releasing the report.

All of these megatrends will dramatically shape the world that today's children and young people will grow up in. There are immense challenges and there are opportunities to plan, innovate and prepare. But we must take action today to ensure we make Australia a better place tomorrow for the children of today.

³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3863406?ln=en>

⁴ <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/publications/childrens-rights-australia-scorecard>

⁵ <https://www.csiro.au/en/news/news-releases/2022/seven-megatrends-that-will-shape-the-next-20-years>



SECTION 2

How UNICEF Australia Works for Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

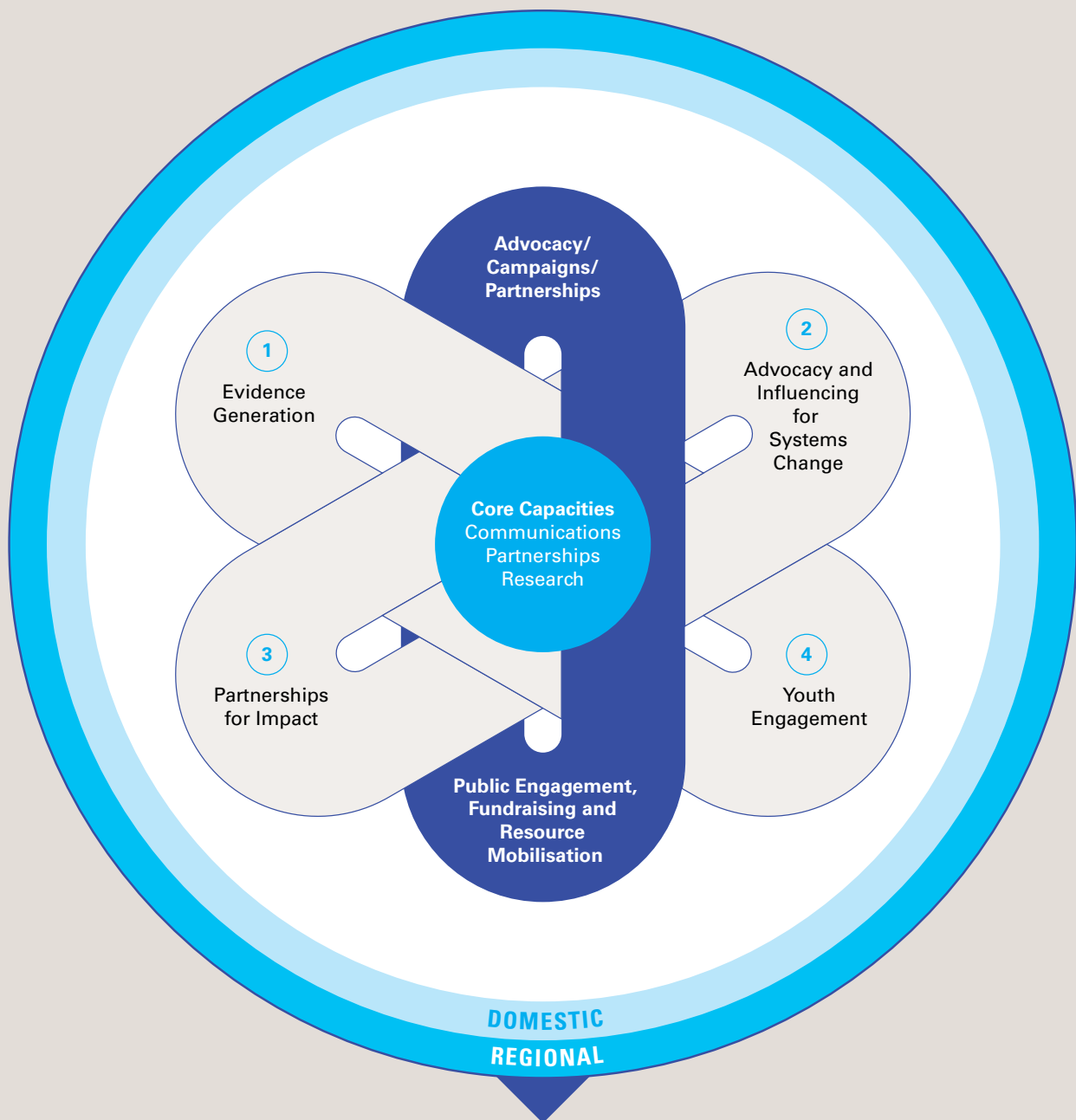
Globally, UNICEF anchors its work to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child which guides our work across 190 countries. In these countries, UNICEF assists Governments to form policies and deliver services that work for children. It responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children and builds partnerships and engagement with public- and private sector actors to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and achieve child rights at scale

UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

UNICEF Australia has a unique role to play in advocating for children in Australia. We bring global reach and credibility. We are led by evidence. We seek to work constructively with Governments, collaborate directly with children and young people and mobilise public support for children. The issues we focus on here in Australia are aligned with those that UNICEF addresses globally but are also informed locally by research and consultation.

“ We seek to work constructively with Governments, collaborate directly with children and young people and mobilise public support for children. ”

How we work to create positive and lasting change for children



RESULTS FOR EVERY CHILD

Figure 1: How we work to create positive and lasting change for children

Our Theory of Change

Our vision is an Australia where every child is healthy, educated, protected, respected and involved. We believe in elevating the voices of children and young people to be engaged and influential young leaders. And by advocating powerfully for the interests of young people – providing the evidence and the expertise – we believe we can get new laws, policies and practices adopted that support children’s rights, as well as increase the resources devoted to children.

In all this we want to take the Australian public on a journey to take action to support children and young people, to hear them, to value them, and to give them opportunity and a say in their future. Working with partners we also believe we have a critical role to play in addressing immediate gaps in the system where children are impacted and to pilot innovative solutions that can be taken to scale.

The diagram below is our Theory of Change and it is a blueprint for ‘how’ we will seek to contribute to real and lasting outcomes for children in health, education, participation, child protection and the environment. UNICEF has a universal mandate for every child, that

“ We believe in elevating the voices of children and young people to be engaged and influential young leaders. ”

UNICEF Australia seeks to uphold locally. To be effective we need to use resources wisely and target areas where our organisation can make a unique contribution, where we can bring our global reach and our local expertise to partner with others and mobilise the Australian public to achieve real outcomes for children.

UNICEF Australia will maintain its vision for an Australia where children are healthy, educated, respected, protected and involved. We will champion these issues in our advocacy with government and in the public contest of ideas. We will be a leading voice on these issues to change policy, to change attitudes, and to change behaviour. We will also ‘walk the talk’ on involving children and young people and involve and seek their input on issues of concern to them. We will seek their ideas on solutions, to give them an opportunity to have their voice heard and to enable them to be leaders today and tomorrow.



Children in Australia Theory of Change 2023-2025

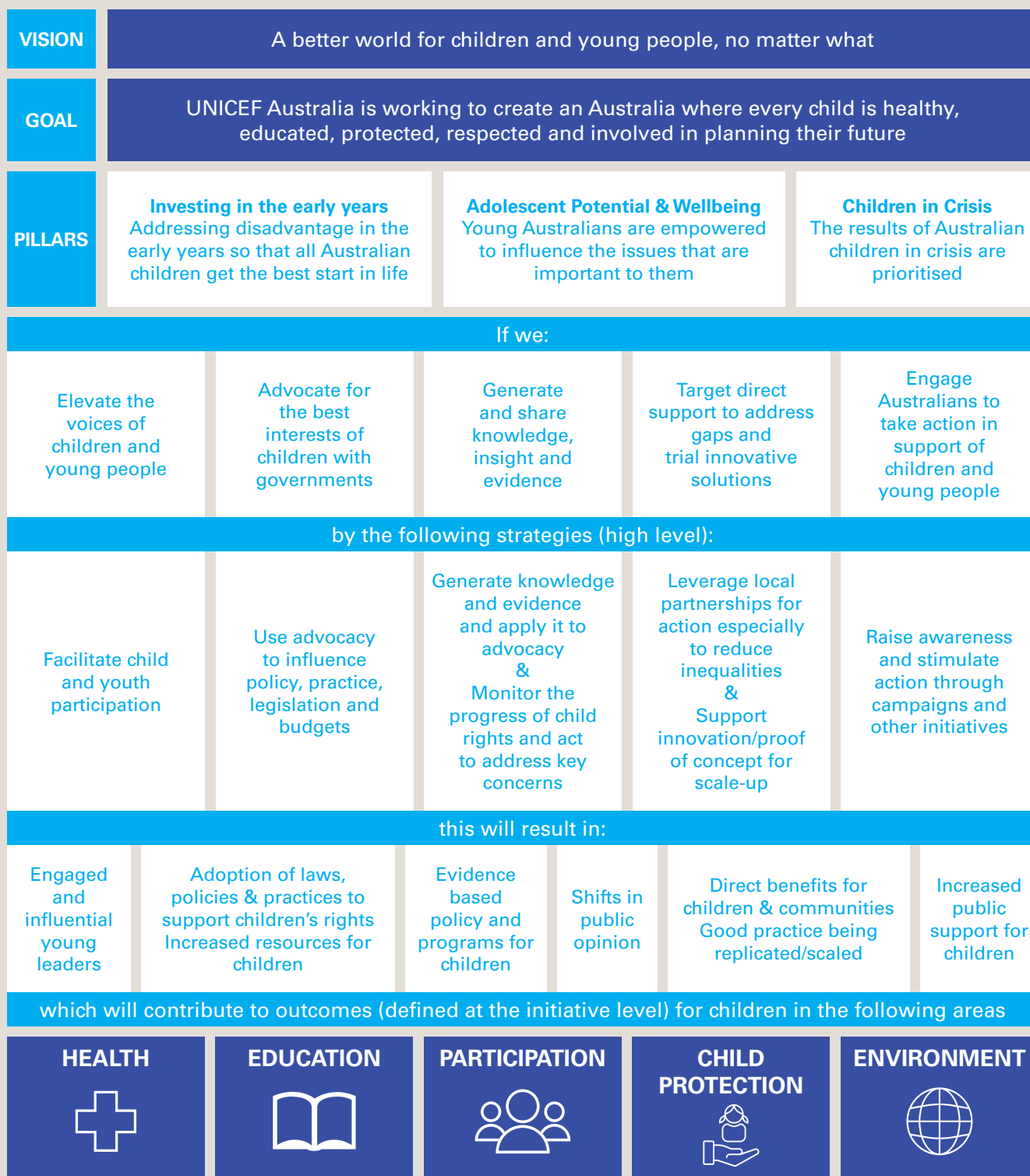


Figure 2: Children in Australia Theory of Change

Where UNICEF Australia will focus its efforts

Policy, advocacy and campaigns

Through this strategy UNICEF Australia will continue to work cooperatively with decision makers at all levels of government to influence positive change and improve outcomes for all children and young people across Australia.

We will seek to generate the evidence and solutions required in partnership with children and relevant experts. We will mobilise our supporters, sector partners and the Australian public through campaigns and in our media presence and we will influence key decision-makers through high-level strategic engagement. This approach will lead to the adoption of new laws, policies and practices to support children's rights, it will support increased public resourcing of children and direct benefits for children and communities and it will shape public attitudes and behaviours towards children and their role in our society.



Our strategy has three key commitments:

- 1 Game changers**
To drive signature campaigns where UNICEF Australia will focus its efforts on the areas it believes it is best positioned to make the biggest difference for children.
- 2 Project voice**
To coordinate the resources of the organisation to speak up for children, help shape the public conversation, and mobilise support from the Australian public.
- 3 Change for every child**
To collaborate across the sector to contribute to a broader set of policy change priorities, aligned with the 'healthy, educated, protected, respected, and involved.'

SECTION 4

Partnerships for Impact

Our Partnerships

UNICEF Australia partners with local community organisations and through cross sectoral alliances to target inequality and accelerate impact, addressing critical gaps and needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised children across Australia.

We will continue to partner to strengthen the evidence base that enriches our advocacy to drive systematic and lasting change as well as supporting engagement with the Australian public around key child rights issues.

Scale our impact for children

UNICEF Australia will increase the scale of its direct impact for children over the next three years through growth of our partnership portfolio and engagement with new communities. Through this work we will develop our knowledge and strengthen our evidence base to deepen our advocacy for change.

We will seek to work with partners that target inequality and disadvantage experienced by children and/or youth, have legitimacy at the community level, have good clinical/technical expertise, and have common mission/shared values with UNICEF Australia.

An important part of our work is to collaborate with First Nations partners. Reconciliation Australia highlights that the absence of collaboration built on genuine partnerships, respectful relationships and cultural knowledge lies at the heart of decades of policy failure. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We will seek out partners that have a strong connection to community and country where they operate and who understand the history and context of the Aboriginal communities where they work. We will seek out partners who have programs led and designed by First Nations peoples.



Accelerate sector wide initiatives

The partnership strategy also seeks to deliver and accelerate sector wide initiatives with both the public and private sector to ensure our impact is at scale and is sustainable. Our Child Friendly Australia Program will help build child-friendly communities of the future. We will continue to advocate and support the Family Friendly Workplaces initiative working with multi sector stakeholders to build a more inclusive, family friendly workplace culture across Australia.

Our Child Rights and Business Program will drive awareness and advocate for greater focus on children and their rights within the private sector across Australia. We will help to support Australian companies to improve their practice.

UNICEF Australia will also continue its emergency response work to reduce the negative impacts of disasters on children by elevating their voices, priorities and experiences in our disaster frameworks, and by establishing a collaborative network of experts to ensure youth-centric, rapid responses in local communities.

“ We will seek out partners who have programs led and designed by First Nations peoples. ”

SECTION 5

Child and Youth Engagement

UNICEF Australia is committed to achieving a step change in the quality and scale of our connectivity with children and young people. We want to amplify the voices of children and young people by engaging at scale and giving them the opportunity to speak out and be heard on issues that impact them.

UNICEF Australia is also committed to demonstrating its thought leadership on issues impacting children and speaking up consistently as a defender and advocate of child rights.

Three drivers inform this commitment:



Impact

Unlocking the unique contribution of children and young people is essential to tackling complex challenges such as climate change and youth mental health;



Authenticity

UNICEF exists to advance the rights and best interests of children, therefore a lack of authentic connection with them risks undermining our credibility and legitimacy;



Building for the future

Enhancing our connectivity with children will build UNICEF for the future by growing our relevance for a generation of supporters.

Over the next three years, UNICEF Australia will drive collaboration with children and young people to achieve impact. We will invest in building our skills, capabilities and understanding to better systematise child and youth engagement and impact across all functions. And we will incorporate children and young people as an important new audience in media, brand, communications, and supporter development work.

By 2025 we are seeking to achieve:

- Transformation as a trusted organisation providing a platform for children and youth
- Growth in impact through advocacy and programmatic outcomes
- Growth in scale of engagement with children and young people
- Growth in organisational capacity required to excel in child and youth engagement.



Measuring our Impact and Effectiveness



Annual Effectiveness Review

Over the life of the Making Australia a Better Place for Children strategy we will conduct an annual effectiveness review that will be completed by December each year. The purpose of this review will be to a) assess how effective our strategies have been in reaching our desired outcomes against a set of key evaluation questions;⁶ b) to reflect on lessons learned; and c) to help shape any adjustments required.



Quarterly progress reporting

We will use a traffic light system to report progress in key domains on a quarterly basis. This will include a small set of performance indicators and a narrative against what is working well, what is stalling, and why.



Final Strategy Review and Evaluation

In 2025 we will conduct a thorough end of strategy evaluation.

