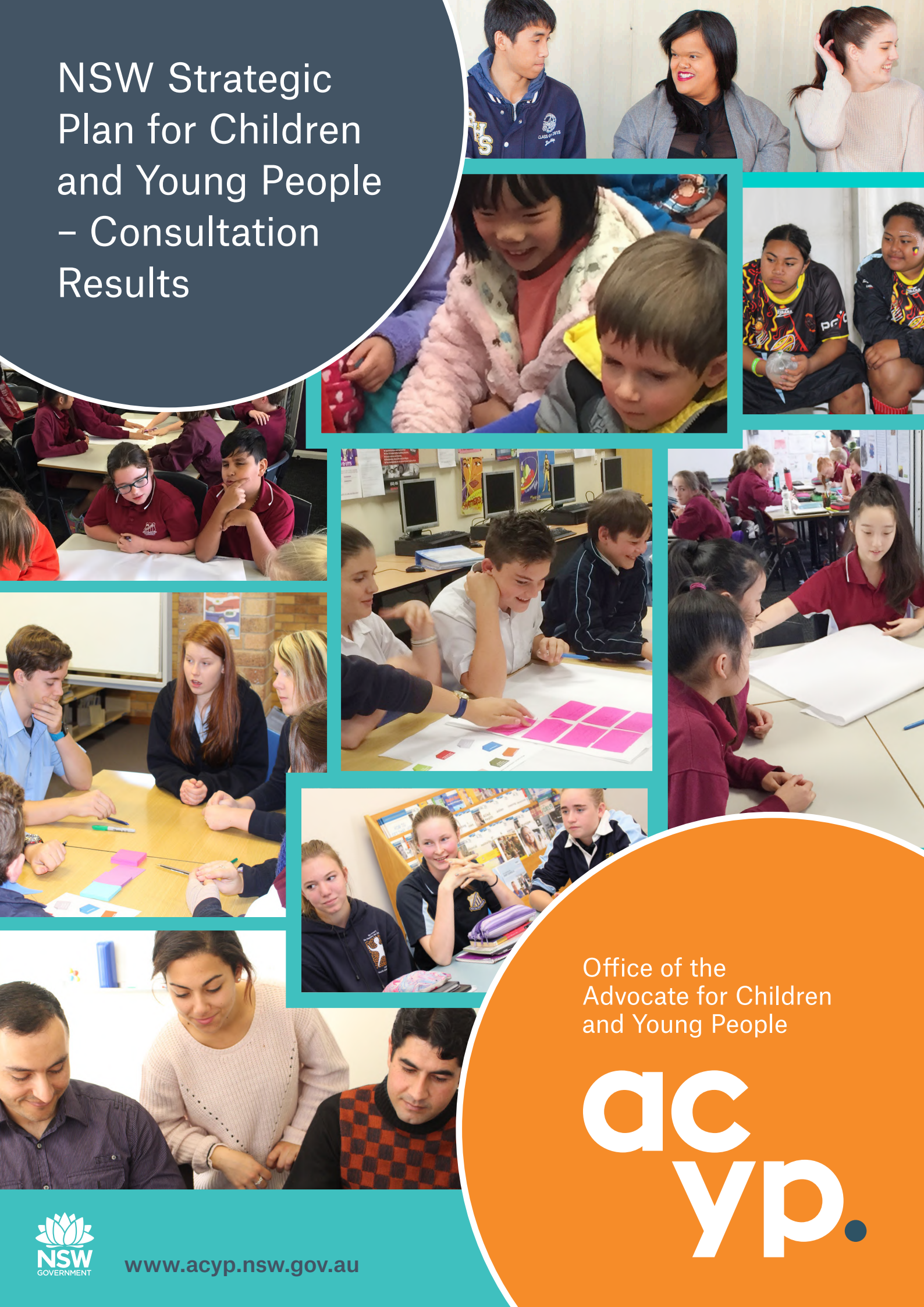


NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Consultation Results



Office of the
Advocate for Children
and Young People

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Minister's Message

The Hon. John Ajaka, MLC

Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism



This report from the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People captures the input of children and young people across the state on what they want to see in the first legislated Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW.

As the Minister responsible for the carriage of the Plan on behalf of the NSW Government, I have been delighted to have been involved in its development.

From the beginning, we wanted to make sure that the voices of children and young people shaped the foundations of the Plan. The Advocate and his team travelled the state from Broken Hill to Bondi and from Lismore to Ulladulla to talk with children and young people of all ages and backgrounds.

Particular efforts have been made to ensure that those who may not always get a say had the chance to do so. Across the board, the consultations have been about hearing the real life experiences of children and young people in all their diversity – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, those with disability or mental illness, the academically gifted and those who struggle at school, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those who are homeless or just doing it tough.

Altogether, over 4000 children and young people have had their say in what is one of the largest and most comprehensive consultations ever undertaken with children and young people in the country.

I have been deeply impressed by the quality

of the information in this report and want to take this opportunity to thank every single young person who shared their thoughts and experiences to help improve the lives of all children and young people in NSW.

It is only by involving you – the children and young people of NSW – in the decisions that affect your lives that we can be sure that these decisions really are in the best interests of children and young people.

I also want to thank the many government, non-government, and civil society organisations who have assisted the Advocate in speaking with so many young people across the state. By working together in the ways demonstrated in preparing this report and the development of the Plan, we can continue to make NSW a better place for children and young people.

I look forward to joining you as we take the next steps to deliver the first Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'John Ajaka'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'J' and 'A'.

The Hon. John Ajaka, MLC

Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism

Advocate's Forward

Andrew Johnson

Advocate for Children and Young People

This report is a culmination of consultations that reached more than 4,000 children and young people across NSW.

Having spoken directly to more than 2,000 participants myself I have been impressed by how outward looking children and young people in NSW are and how willing they have been to participate in the development of the Plan. Not only do they have a deep understanding of their own lives and that of their peers, they also have unique insight into what can make their lives better. Interestingly, children and young people across the state highlighted very similar concerns regardless of where they lived.

This report contains the genuine voices of children and young people from all over NSW and highlights how their collective voice is shaping the development of the Strategic Plan. Throughout the consultation process we have been very mindful of ensuring that children and young people were the first to have a say on the Plan. Following each consultation the result of the consultation was fed back to the children and young people who participated. This report and the final Strategic Plan will be shared with consultation participants to allow them to see where and how their input has been used.

As the Advocate for Children and Young People, ensuring that a wide range of voices reflective of the diverse backgrounds and life experiences of those living in NSW was of particular importance. So too was ensuring that those who may not normally have an opportunity to have a say were included in the consultation process. We have engaged with many organisations who work with children and young people doing it tough, such as those who experience homelessness, out of home



care, the juvenile justice system, young parents, and those with disability or mental illness.

The inclusion of children and young people in the development of the Plan does not end with their participation in consultations; it will be instrumental throughout the Plan's development. Following the launch of the final Plan, children and young people will have an ongoing role in providing feedback and monitoring outcomes.

There are many people and organisations to thank, without whom we would not have been able to talk with and listen to the range of children and young people that have been engaged in the consultations. Government, non-government and civil society organisations have offered overwhelming support in ensuring that the children and young people they work with had their say on the development of the Plan.

Of course our biggest thank you is to the children and young people who participated in the consultations. I look forward to reporting on the next steps in the development of the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'A. Johnson'.

Andrew Johnson

Advocate for Children and Young People



Introduction

Every process has a beginning and this report sets out, in detail, the beginning of the development of the first whole of government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW.

Under the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, the Advocate is mandated to prepare, in consultation with Minister John Ajaka MLC, a three-year whole of government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW. Promoting the participation of children and young people in decision making is central to the role of the office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and as such it was essential to ensure not only that the voices of children and young people inform the *first* Strategic Plan but that children and young people had the first say on setting the themes and directions of the Plan.

Our commitment to ensuring that the voices of children and young people feature in the Strategic Plan led us to consult with more than 4,000 children and young people in NSW. In this report you will discover the results of our consultations along with the methods employed to engage such a vast number in the consultation process and the learnings we take from the process.

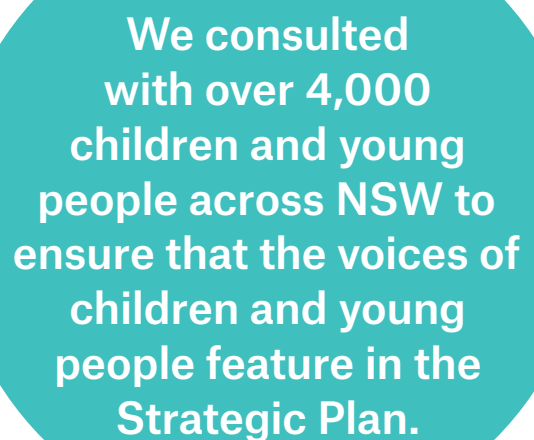
Consulting with more than 4,000 children and young people in a meaningful way is certainly no easy feat and we are indebted to the many government and non-government organisations who came forward with their support and assistance in engaging children and young people through their networks and of course a special thanks to the children and young people who took part in the consultations.

All participants in the consultation process contributed their time voluntarily; the willingness and enthusiasm displayed by children and young people not only in committing their time to engage in the consultations but also the meaningful

contributions they made are an overwhelming reminder of the value of participation.

The first whole of government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW is significant progress in the NSW Government's commitment to making the lives of our youngest citizens better. Through positive collaboration across government departments the Plan aims to bring about positive and tangible change for children and young people.

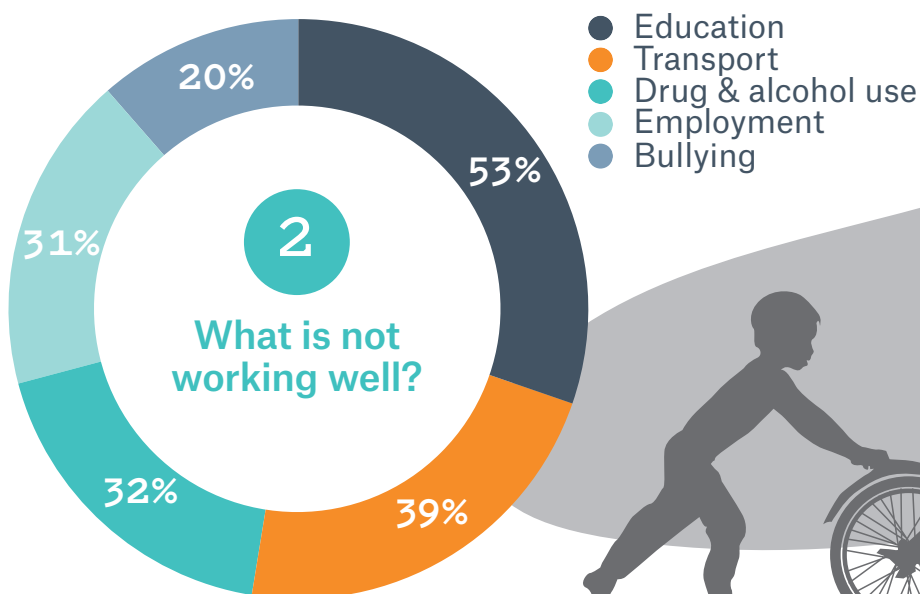
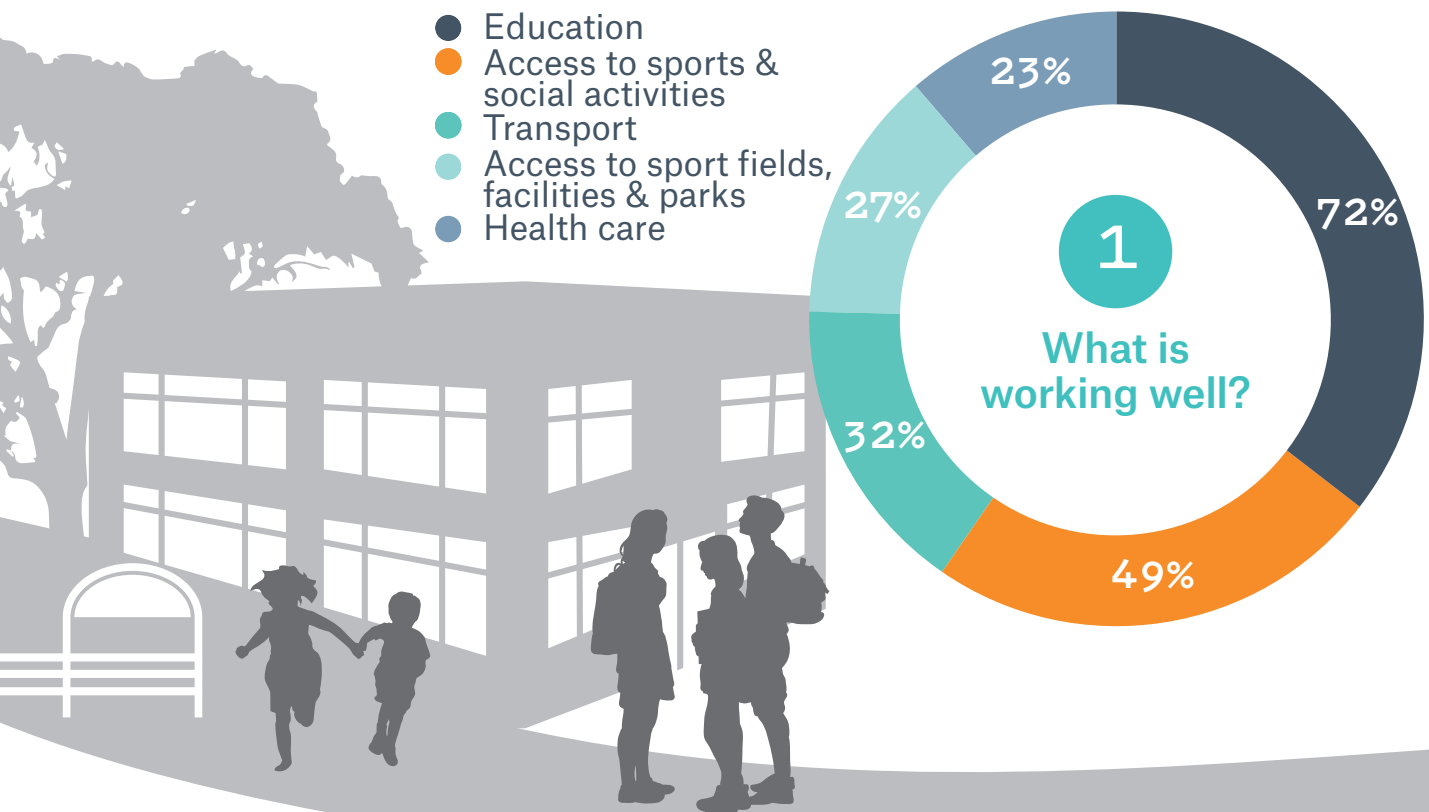
Throughout the pages of this report you will gain insight into how children and young people in NSW view what is already being done to assist them in every day life and you will also find out what they feel the NSW Government can do or change to further enhance their experience of growing up in NSW.



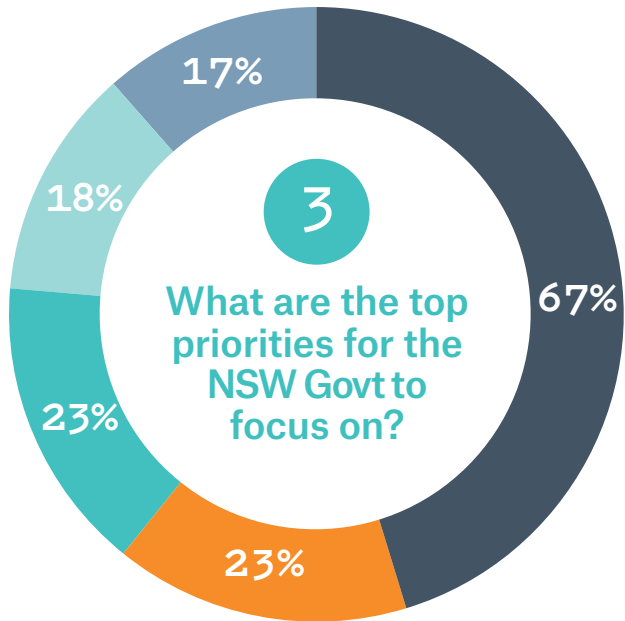
We consulted with over 4,000 children and young people across NSW to ensure that the voices of children and young people feature in the Strategic Plan.

Results Summary

Below is a summary of the top answers to four questions as answered by more than 4,000 children and young people. They answered the questions reflecting on their lives and the lives of other children and young people in NSW.



Note: Percentage totals do not add up to 100 because of multiple responses.



3
What are the top priorities for the NSW Govt to focus on?

- Education
- Transport
- Employment
- Health care
- Mental health support & awareness



4
What are the qualities of a good society?

- Respect
- Equality
- Safety
- Supportive environments
- Inclusion

Key Findings

Children and young people were asked four questions in each consultation, they answered each question unprompted. Below is a summary of our findings.



Respect

A common theme throughout the consultations with children and young people was respect. Children and young people seek mutual respect from their peers and adults alike.



Voice

Children and young people want to have their opinions heard and taken seriously. They are experts in their own lives and wish to be involved in the making of decisions that directly affect them.



Safety

Children and young people want to feel safe and protected. They need to have a secure home, feel safe in their local communities and for schools to be free from bullying and violence.



Supportive Environments

Supportive environments are essential for children and young people. They spoke about needing support in many areas of their lives including education, employment, health and mental health. This is true for all children and young people, and especially for those who are doing it tough.



Inclusion & Equality

Children and young people want to live in a society where everyone is treated equally, feels included and is free from discrimination and racism.



Connectedness

A sense of belonging and connectedness to others is critical to the wellbeing of children and young people. In the consultations, children and young people discussed the importance of feeling connected to adults as well as to their peers, this applies to both online and offline environments.



Opportunities

Children and young people feel strongly that they should all be afforded the same opportunities. They repeatedly raised that they want equal opportunities with regards to education, employment and access to sports and other activities. Children and young people also want the opportunity to learn important life skills to prepare them for adulthood.

Respect

Many children and young people reported experiencing positive and respectful relationships with adults, including parents, teachers, police and youth workers.

Children and young people were also of the view that not all adults treat them with respect and in some cases can have a negative attitude towards them. To demonstrate this they highlighted examples of personal experiences on public transport and experiencing age discrimination in the work place.

Children and young people expressed that their generation feels inhibited by community negativity and a lack of adult belief in their abilities and motivation:

"Young people need to be accepted, there is a stereotype that we do not try and that we are all bad influences in society. This is not true and can cause us to feel rejected."
Male, 11-17yrs

"We need a government that will support and respect younger people. Young people have the ability to do great things it's just the negativity in our community that drags them down and stops them from being great." Male, 11-17yrs

Children and young people want to have their opinions heard and taken seriously.

Voice

Children and young people expressed a desire to have their voice heard in all aspects of their lives.

This includes their individual circumstances (such as where they want to live if their family breaks down) as well as issues affecting all children and young people in NSW (through youth councils, conferences and other events and government processes).

Children and young people want to have their opinions heard and taken seriously:

"A good society values the opinions of young people, even if they are inexperienced." Female, 11-17yrs

"Adults to treat children with respect, all children should have the right of opinion, their opinion should be taken with respect and seriousness." Male, 11-17yrs

Some young people raised that the NSW Government needs to find ways to enable all children and young people to participate and have a say:

"Not just popular kids get a say or participate - everybody is equal."
Female, 11-17yrs

"Encouraging local Councils to talk to the average teen not just the high achievers or the troubled teens to get feedback."
Female, 11-17yrs





Safety

While some children and young people expressed feeling safe in their local communities and at school, many felt that the following areas could be targeted to improve their overall sense of safety:

- **Bullying:** Bullying both in and out of school is a major concern for children and young people, particularly those under 10 years of age. This included both on and offline bullying - children and young people did not make a distinction between on and offline bullying but viewed it as a continuum. They discussed that more can be done in schools to stop bullying behaviour.
- **Safety on public transport:** Children and young people repeatedly raised concerns about not feeling safe on buses and trains. Some ideas given to increase their sense of safety were to have more police patrols on buses and trains, to have more security cameras and make student-only carriages on trains.
- **Domestic violence:** Children and young people mentioned domestic violence as an area that needs more attention. They were particularly concerned about the impact that domestic violence has on children and young people living in such situations.
- **Crime:** Crime by both adults and young people was also frequently raised. This was

typically linked to children and young people reporting that they feel unsafe in many public areas, particularly local parks and on public transport. This was mentioned more often by Aboriginal children and young people.

Younger children often raised fears of "stranger danger" and being abducted or kidnapped.

- **Drug and alcohol use:** Children and young people were concerned about drug and alcohol use among both adults and other children and young people. They reported feeling unsafe in particular areas where there is high drug and alcohol consumption. Young people also frequently said that drugs continue to be too easily accessible for children and young people.

Notably, children and young people living outside of Sydney raised drug and alcohol use as a major concern more frequently than those who live in Sydney.

Children and young people living outside of Sydney raised drug and alcohol use as a major concern more frequently than those living in Sydney.



Supportive Environments

Children and young people thought the following areas were working well in terms of support and would like to see them continued:

- **Support at school:** Children and young people like that many schools offer extra support for students who are falling behind, including one-on-one mentoring and homework centres.
- **Mental health support:** Young people aged 18-24 years spoke favourably about the support available for those with mental health problems, especially 24 hour support services and organisations such as Headspace and Beyond Blue.
- **General health support:** Children and young people reported the benefits of Medicare, bulk-billing, free health services, good doctors, vaccination programs and free dental care for children and young people in rural areas.
- **Youth centres, groups and Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC):** Aboriginal children and young people were markedly

more likely than non-Aboriginal children and young people to report that these are working well for them. The overwhelming majority specifically mentioned PCYCs and were extremely positive about their services and facilities.

Children and young people would, however, like more support in the following areas:

- **Support at school:** Children and young people would like schools to provide more support for students who are struggling with their schoolwork, including mentoring and tutoring. Many also feel under enormous pressure at school and would like to see this reduced. This was raised particularly in relation to the HSC experience and the amount of homework assigned.

Children and young people also reported that support in schools can be achieved through greater flexibility. One idea that was raised repeatedly was to have greater flexibility in school hours; such as later start times, or longer days with a three day weekend.

Another idea put forward by many children and young people was flexibility in the school curriculum, and most notably, incorporating lessons around life skills (e.g. managing finances, living independently).

- **Housing support:** Children and young people, and most notably those under 10 years of age, reported that homelessness was one of the most important areas for the NSW Government to focus on.

In addition, children and young people also expressed significant concern about increasing housing prices, with many feeling afraid that they would not be able to afford to buy or rent their own homes. This fear was especially heightened among 11-17 year olds.

- **Health support:** Children and young people would like to see more health support including, cheaper health care (particularly



for dental services) and more bulk billing, better quality health care, reduced wait times in hospitals and medical centres, easier access to health services, more hospital beds and more hospital services for children only. Some young people also raised the cost of private health care and medications, and sexually transmissible infections as important issues to address.

- **Mental health support:** Some young people would like to see greater mental health awareness and support. While some spoke about the stigma associated with accessing support and feeling embarrassed; others discussed having open conversations about mental health in school contexts. Some young people discussed still not knowing what help is available. A common theme throughout the consultations was the need for more information about how they can help their friends with mental health concerns and how to recognise when their friends might be in need of mental health support.

Inclusion and Equality

Children and young people reported that they want to be treated equally to adults. Also they would like a society with no discrimination or racism, where children and young people of all backgrounds, religions, and those with disability, are made to feel like they belong. Children and young people also want equality for both sexes and for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) young people.

Typical words used in their responses were: “multiculturalism”; “peaceful society”; “acceptance of differences”; “diversity” and “tolerance”. In response to the question of what are the qualities of a good society for children and young people, one young person wrote:

“A society where age, race etc. is not a determining factor for anything, and simply a fact.” (F, 11-17yrs)

- **Inequality:** Children and young people often spoke about inequality across the board. This was mentioned most often in relation to inequality between the public and private education systems. Children and young people felt strongly that they should all receive the same education.

A gender analysis showed that inequality between boys and girls in sports is also of concern. Specifically, many were of the view that girls are not offered the same opportunities and activities as boys, and also are often treated differently, such as different game rules being applied. Some reported that sporting clubs often give boys better equipment and priority over games.


Children and young people also spoke repeatedly about equality for LGBTQI people, asking for their legal and social acceptance.

- **Discrimination and racism:** Discrimination and racism were raised as issues by all children and young people, although more frequently by Aboriginal children and young people.

Children and young people of different religious backgrounds also discussed experiences where they had felt targeted due to their faiths.

- **Inclusion of children and young people with disability:** Children and young people asked for better recognition and inclusion of those with disability. Some discussions were around better disability access in some places, such as cinemas and recreation centres.

Some ideas given by children and young people to foster inclusion and equality were to hold multicultural days in local areas; educate children from a young age that racism and discrimination are unacceptable; and explain disability to “able” children.



They would like a society with no discrimination or racism, where children and young people of all backgrounds and religions, including those with disability, are made to feel like they belong.

Children and young people want positive relationships with each other and with adults. Children and young people thought these areas are working well and want to see them continue:

- **Connectedness at school:** Some children and young people spoke about their strong sense of belonging and connection to school. This was evident in their discussions about teachers that are committed and care about their students, opportunities for student voice and leadership at school and a warm and welcoming school culture.
- **Connectedness through transport:** For many children and young people, access to public transport allows them to be connected. It gets them to and from school and other study, to extra-curricular activities and enables them to socialise on the weekend. Children and young people reported that a variety of aspects of public transport were working well for them. These included free or concessional travel for students; the Opal card system; accessibility of buses in their local areas; free shuttle buses in some areas; buses just for school students; a good and fast train system; and free family travel on Sundays.
- **Connectedness through sport and recreation:** Sports and other activities is a major avenue promoting connectedness among children and young people. They reported the following areas as working well and that they would like to see continue: access to local parks and playgrounds; good sports fields and venues; and sport and recreation and leisure centres.
- **Connectedness through youth centres and PCYCs:** Many children and young people spoke favourably about youth centres and PCYCs in their local areas. In addition, when such centres had been closed down in their communities, children and young people expressed disappointment. Comments were that these centres are places for young people to be together and socialise through positive mechanisms.
- **Connectedness through culture:** This was a dominant theme among Aboriginal children and young people. Specifically, they reported feeling connected to their culture through National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week, Welcome to Country, Aboriginal studies at school, being taught by elders and through cultural dance and community languages.
- **Connectedness through technology:** Children and young people raised the importance of technology in connectedness in several areas. In particular, they like the use of technology in education to enhance their learning and the use of social media to spread ideas and information. Importantly, many children and young people reported that they would like to be able to access online information relevant to them in one place/website.

However, children and young people also felt that their sense of belonging and connectedness to others could be improved in the following areas:

- **Education:** Children and young people would like to see a greater focus on the following in schools: fostering positive student-teacher relations; an engaging and interactive school curriculum; more opportunities for students from different schools to meet and interact; more individualised learning; and more opportunities for a voice in all aspects of school life.
- **Public transport:** With respect to

increasing connectedness through public transport, children and young people would like: more frequent buses and trains, including more late night, early morning and weekend transport; transport costs to be reduced for all students, including those at university, being able to travel for free or all children and young people of school ages travelling for free; school transport to reach a wider area (i.e. better travel routes); buses and trains to arrive at scheduled times; and to be allowed to use student passes for travel outside to and from after school activities.

- **Technology:** Children and young people often raised poor internet access and slow internet speed as barriers to connectedness. Interestingly, many viewed too much time spent using technology as

hampering connectedness with others. The use of technology and social media to bully children and young people was also a common theme that emerged.

- **Social activities:** Children and young people raised a range of social activities that they would like more of in order to enhance their connectedness to other children and young people. These included more events and festivals for young people only; and in rural areas particularly more occasions for young people from different towns in a region to get together.

Children and young people reported that school does not provide them with the opportunity to learn the skills that prepare them for real life.

Opportunities

Children and young people thought these areas were working well and would like them to continue:

- **Opportunities for sport and social activities:** Children and young people appreciate the variety of sports and extra-curricular subjects to choose from, both in and out of school. They reported that there are good local sports clubs for weekend sport, and they enjoy sports events for children and young people, especially when they are free, as well as organised sport and exercise such as rugby league, gymnastics and boxing.
- **Educational opportunities:** Many children and young people spoke favourably about opportunities in NSW for free public education, high quality education, subject choices and resources and facilities.

However, children and young people would like more work to be done to increase their opportunities in the following areas:

- **Educational and life skills opportunities:** Many children and young people reported
- **Employment opportunities:** Limited work opportunities for young people were a

that their opportunities to learn are hampered due to insufficient resources, (particularly for public schools, rural schools and schools in disadvantaged areas), not having enough public schools and subsequently class sizes being too big as well as inequity between public and private education.

Children and young people also repeatedly reported that school does not provide them with the opportunity to learn the skills that prepare them for real life, such as taxes, housing loans, managing finances, first aid and raising a family.

Children and young people, including those still in primary school, were also extremely concerned that increasing university fees will limit their opportunities for tertiary education.

major concern. Young people repeatedly discussed the lack of jobs in rural and regional areas, lack of opportunities for work placements, work experience and apprenticeships, difficulties in gaining employment with no prior experience and difficulties for students to find casual or part-time work.

Young people reported that they would like the following employment opportunities: more access to information about how to get a job and jobs in high demand; more programs to help young people be employable; more work placements and internships in government departments; more assistance for young people with no experience to obtain their first job; and an increase in youth and graduate wages.

- **Opportunities for children and young people with disability:** Children and young people discussed the need for better opportunities for those with disability. Ideas raised included more teachers' aids and tutors in schools.
- **Opportunities through public transport:** As was raised in the area of connectedness, public transport is a mechanism that opens up opportunities to children and young people. Consequently, children and young people asked for

reduced transport costs, especially for travel to and from tertiary studies, and for better access to transport in rural areas.

- **Sport and recreation opportunities:** An issue raised across the consultations was that many children and young people are excluded from participating in sports and other extra-curricular recreational activities (e.g. art, drama) due to the cost of these activities. There was agreement across children and young people that sport and recreational opportunities should be affordable for everyone.
- **Lack of activities in local areas:** Children and young people often raised a lack of things to do in their local areas as a major issue. This was especially true for children and young people living in rural and regional areas. Young people described feeling bored on weekends and at night.

Suggestions they put forward were more shopping centres, cinemas, entertainment and recreational facilities in rural areas, PCYC programs for young people in all areas, more places for young people to simply be together and more carnivals and events for young people only, such as sporting events, dances, movie nights and concerts.



Disadvantage

We were committed to ensuring that the voices of disadvantaged children and young people in NSW were included in shaping the Plan. In doing so, we consulted with children and young people in a juvenile justice setting, in residential care, as well as homeless children and young people, and young parents. We understood that the issues raised by these children and young people would sometimes be sensitive and so we also worked with a specialist service to conduct in-depth individual interviews with some young adults.

While children and young people 'doing it tough' raised similar issues to other children and young people, there were some issues specific to this vulnerable group.

Accessing basic services, such as public libraries was also discussed as being difficult for homeless young people.

- **Accommodation and crisis support:** Children and young people 'doing it tough' spoke about not having a safe home to live in, not having enough beds in medium to long-term refuges and not having access to crisis accommodation suited to their needs (for example, not enough refuges for girls only; homeless Muslim young people do not have enough services offered by workers with an understanding of their religion). They also raised that due to bed shortages, they are often offered accommodation that is too far away for them to travel to.
- **Lack of support:** Young people also raised the issue of a lack of available support after normal business hours and over the weekend. They recalled experiences of being kicked out of home in the middle of the night and not having a service to phone to help with accommodation.
- **Have to re-tell their story:** They also discussed the trauma of having to re-tell their story each time they approached a new service or refuge. Young people were of the view that their records should be shared among services to avoid them having to relive their experiences regularly.
- **Homeless access:** Accessing basic services, such as public libraries was also discussed as being difficult for homeless young people, as forms require that they have a permanent address.
- **Out-of-home care and transitioning out of care:** Some young people in out-of-home care felt that community service workers did not provide them with sufficient support. In particular, they discussed the lack of assistance once they turn 16 years of age, due to no longer being classified as a 'child'. Some young people discussed experiences of being in independent living at 16 years of age, making it impossible to complete their schooling (for example, no access to the internet to do assignments).
- **Unable to engage in activities:** Young people in out-of-home care reported that they were required to move around too much and that they were unable to engage in activities that other children and young people take for granted (for example, taking part in sports of their choice, catching up with friends, visiting family, accessing the internet, going to the movies).
- **Not being listened to:** They expressed a strong sentiment that they are not being listened to and did not know what was happening to them. "I wish they could be honest and just tell me what's going on." Further, they stated that they needed

greater and real connection with their workers. When things were working well for them they stated it was when a worker "breaks the rules" - when asked to elaborate they stated when the worker goes the extra mile.

- **More rights in care:** Young people would also like their leaving care plans to be arranged earlier and to be more detailed, especially in relation to housing. Some felt that their workers did not listen to them and what they wanted. They spoke about wanting more rights in care, including the right to choose where they stay.
- **Education:** Children and young people felt that more support is needed in mainstream schools for disadvantaged students. They reported that they typically

end up disengaged from school and not attending because schools are not equipped to deal with them; catering only for "ordinary" students.

- **Discrimination:** While many children and young people spoke about being discriminated against due to their age, children and young people 'doing it tough' reported facing additional discrimination. Some reported that due to their backgrounds, they were often not given a chance by employers. Others talked about shopkeepers distrusting them due to their appearance, asking them to lift up their shirts upon leaving stores.

Disability

The commitment to ensuring that all children and young people are represented in the Plan led to in depth consultations with children and young people with disability. While the issue of disability came up with all children and young people, those with disability raised some issues that were specific to their life experience.

- **Cost involved:** Children and young people with disability are both aware and worried about the cost involved in ensuring that they have the tools to partake in everyday activities. All children and young people with disability who participated in the consultation process highlighted their desire to be treated similarly to everyone else. Most children and young people with disability felt that some opportunities are not afforded to them as a result of their disability.
- **Support at school:** Children and young people with disability raised that extra support at school is needed. They spoke very often about the need for programs that specifically show that those with disability can build a career.
- **Privacy:** Children and young people were often confused about their privacy when speaking to professionals such as doctors. Many young people reported that they were unsure about what they could and could not speak to a doctor about in confidence. Support for those with mental health issues came up quite strongly throughout the consultation process; awareness of mental health issues was reasonably high.

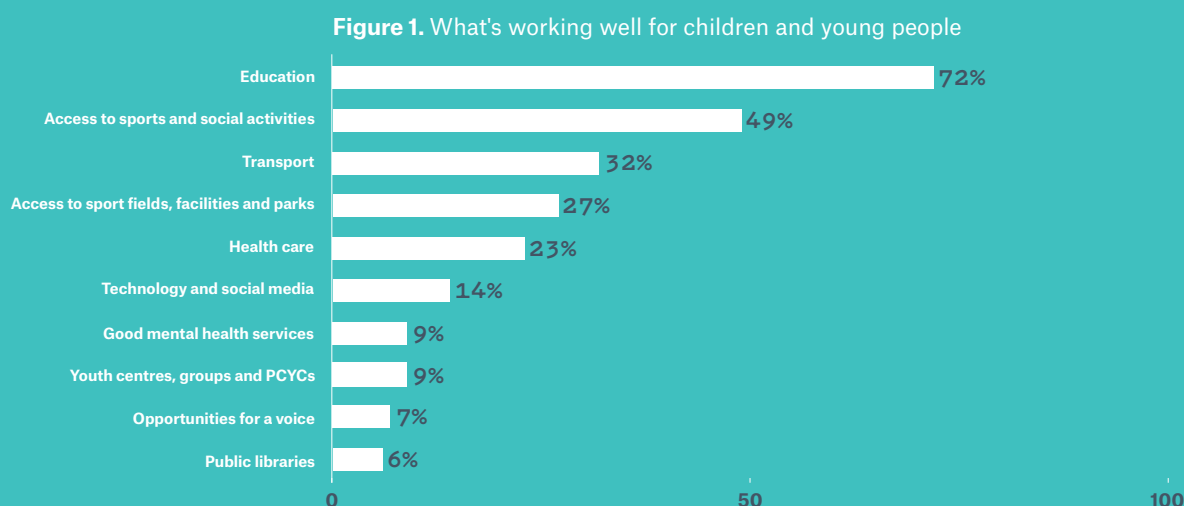
Detailed Findings

This section presents the detailed consultation findings. Results are presented separately for each of the four consultation questions.

1 What's working well for children and young people in NSW?

Overall findings

Figure 1 shows the top 10 areas that children and young people felt were going well for them.



Education was overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned area, with almost three-quarters (72.5%) of the total sample raising this. In particular, children and young people commented that the following things were working well in education:

- Variety of sports and extra-curricular activities to choose from
- Access to high quality education
- Opportunity to receive free education
- Good subjects available
- Good teacher-student relations
- Good resources and facilities
- Extra support for students (mentoring; homework centres).



"School and education is working well for children and young people in NSW. There are good teachers who teach with passion and want the best results for us."

Female, 11-17yrs

"There is still free education which is available to all children and young people. This means that everybody is given the opportunity to have an education."

Female, 18-24yrs

"Education we receive about support programs, for example many schools have a class called 'values ed' or other sorts of moral educations which inform us about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, etc."

Male, 11-17yrs

"Doing school work on things that I am passionate about or can choose a topic on makes me more motivated to and excited to do it. Other people I know feel the same way."

Male, 11-17yrs

Just under half of all children and young people (48.9%) were happy with their **access to sports and social activities**. Specifically, they liked that there are:

- A wide variety of sports to play, both in and out of school
- Good local sports clubs for weekend sport
- Sports events for children and young people, especially when free
- PCYC organised sport and exercise (rugby league, gymnastics, boxing)
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school.

Children and young people also discussed that they like the social aspect to sport and that it promotes a positive lifestyle.

"Well run community activities that are established with a solid reputation e.g. local sports club, Girl Guides and Scouts."

Female, 18-24yrs

"Sports and AFL get you active and make sure that you're not a lazy couch potato."

Male, 0-10yrs

"Out of school soccer, it is so much fun spending time with my friends. It helps me stay healthy while having fun."

Female, 0-10yrs

"Team sports because people get active and meet new people."

Male, 11-17yrs

Almost one-third of all children and young people (31.8%) felt that **public transport** was working well for them; and in particular the:

- Free or concessional travel for students
- Opal card system
- Accessibility of buses in their local areas
- Free shuttle buses in some areas
- Buses just for school students
- Good train system and that it is fast
- Free family travel on Sundays.

"Public transport in terms of opal cards have made it easier to travel."

Female, 11-17yrs

"The free/discounted student transport is very convenient for day to day commutes to and from school."

Female, 11-17yrs

"The train system is very good and reliable."

Male, 18-24yrs

Approximately one-quarter of all children and young people raised that **access to sports fields, facilities and parks** (26.6%) and **health care** (23.1%) were also working well for them. Children and young people spoke favourably about local parks and playgrounds, good sports fields and venues and local sport and recreation and leisure centres.

With regards to good health care, children and young people mentioned Medicare, bulk billing and other free health services; good doctors; vaccination programs and free dental care for young people in rural areas.



Differences among groups of children and young people

Age differences

In general, children and young people across the three age groups (0-10, 11-17, 18-24yrs) agreed on what is working well for children and young people in NSW. However, young people aged 18-24 years raised **good mental health services** (23.7%) more frequently than other age groups:

“Support is always available to youth for any problems or issues that arise and most are available 24/7.” Male, 18-24yrs

“I believe the support groups, e.g. beyond blue, and head space and working well for younger people, as it seems more and more people are coming out with depression and these organisations help!” Male, 18-24yrs

Figures 2-5 show the breakdown of responses to question one by age group.

Figure 2. What’s working well for children and young people by age group

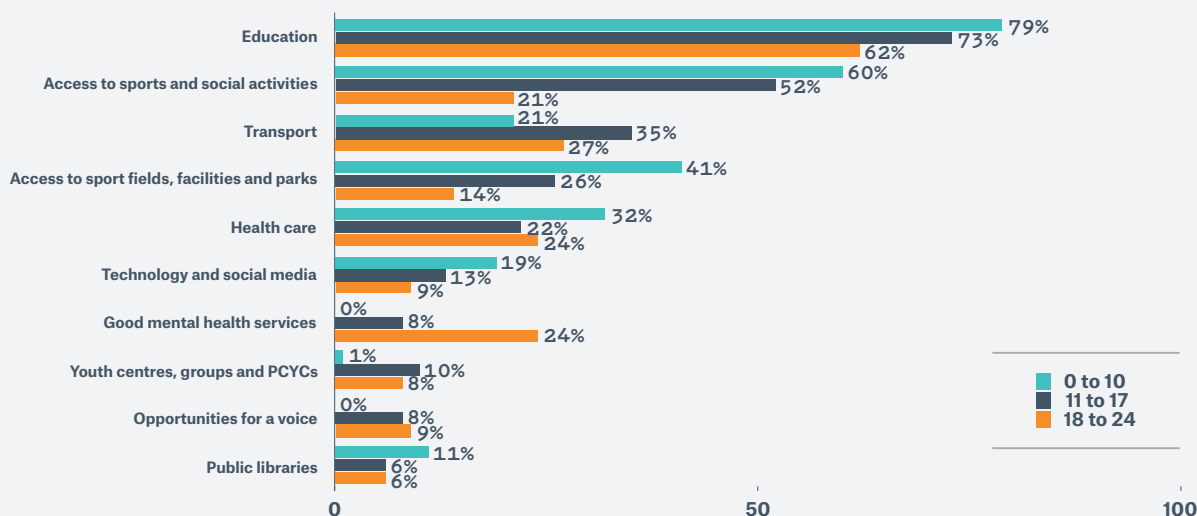


Figure 3. What's working well for children and young people: 0-10 years

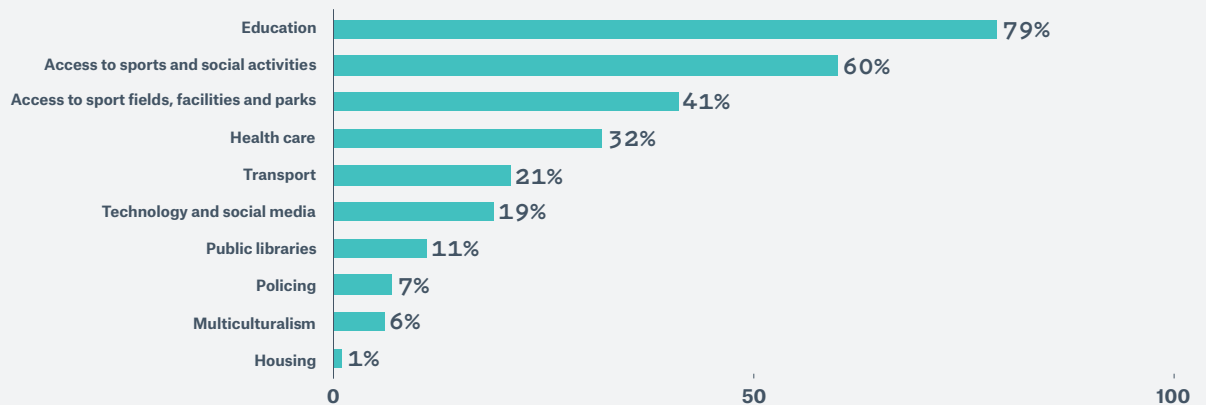


Figure 4. What's working well for children and young people: 11-17 years

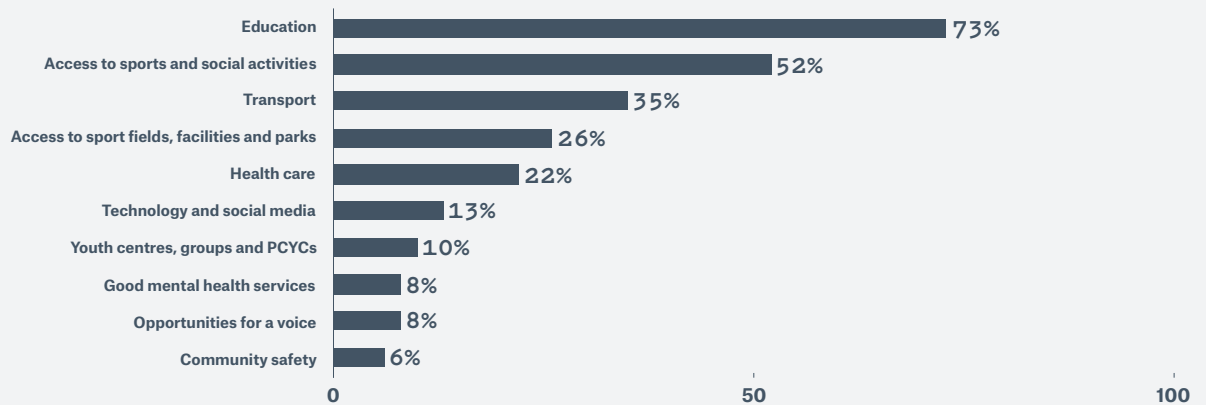
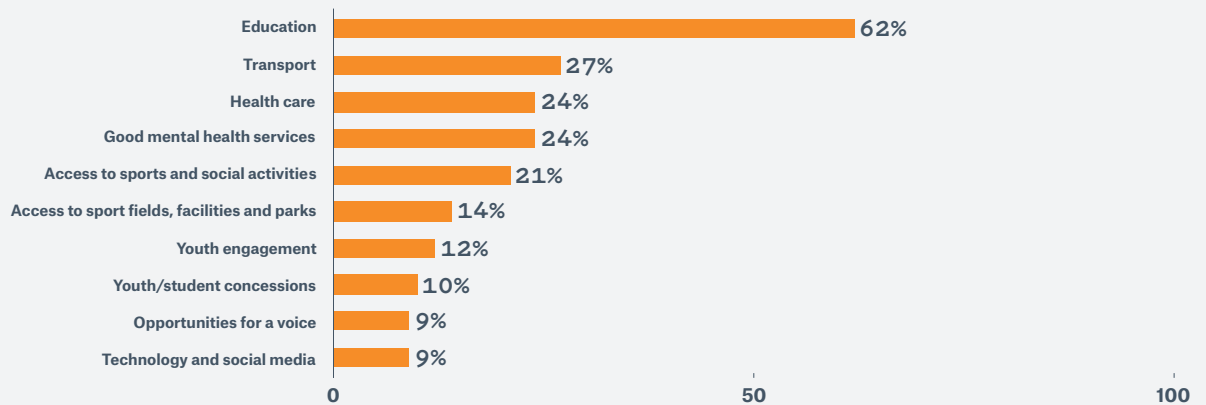


Figure 5. What's working well for children and young people: 18-24 years

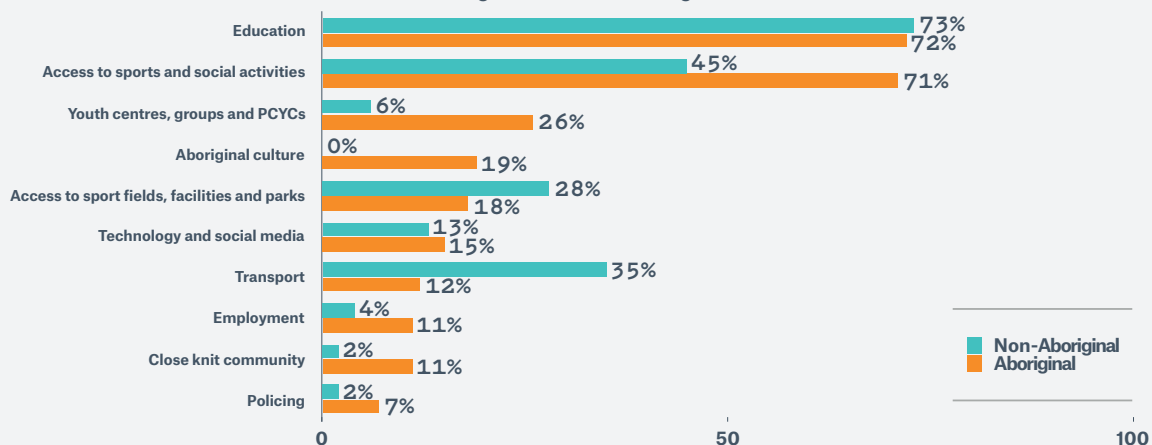


Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people

Aboriginal children and young people were markedly more likely than non-Aboriginal children and young people to report that **youth centres, groups and PCYCs** are working well for them (26.4% compared with 6.2%). The overwhelming majority specifically mentioned PCYCs and were extremely positive about these. More Aboriginal children and young people also reported that access to sports and social activities was working well for them than non-Aboriginal children and young people did (71.5% compared with 45.4%).

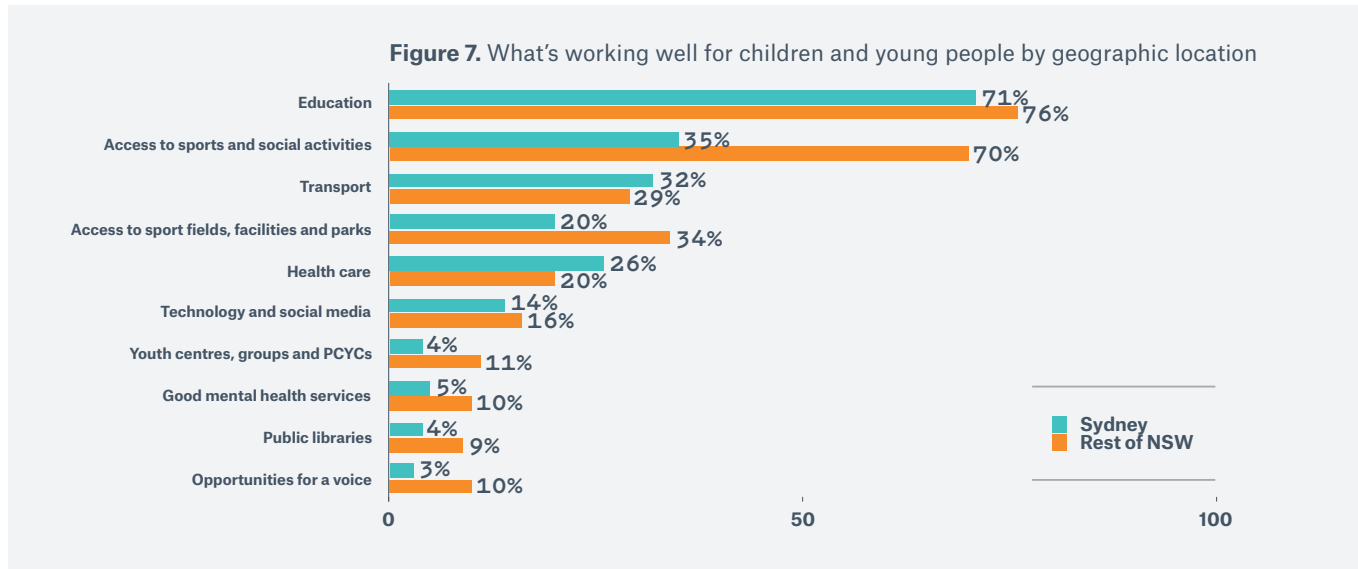
In addition, almost one in five Aboriginal children and young people (18.9%) discussed that **Aboriginal culture** was working well for them. This included NAIDOC week, having Welcome to Country, optional Aboriginal studies at school, elders teaching children and young people, cultural dance and community languages.

Figure 6. What's working well for children and young people:
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal



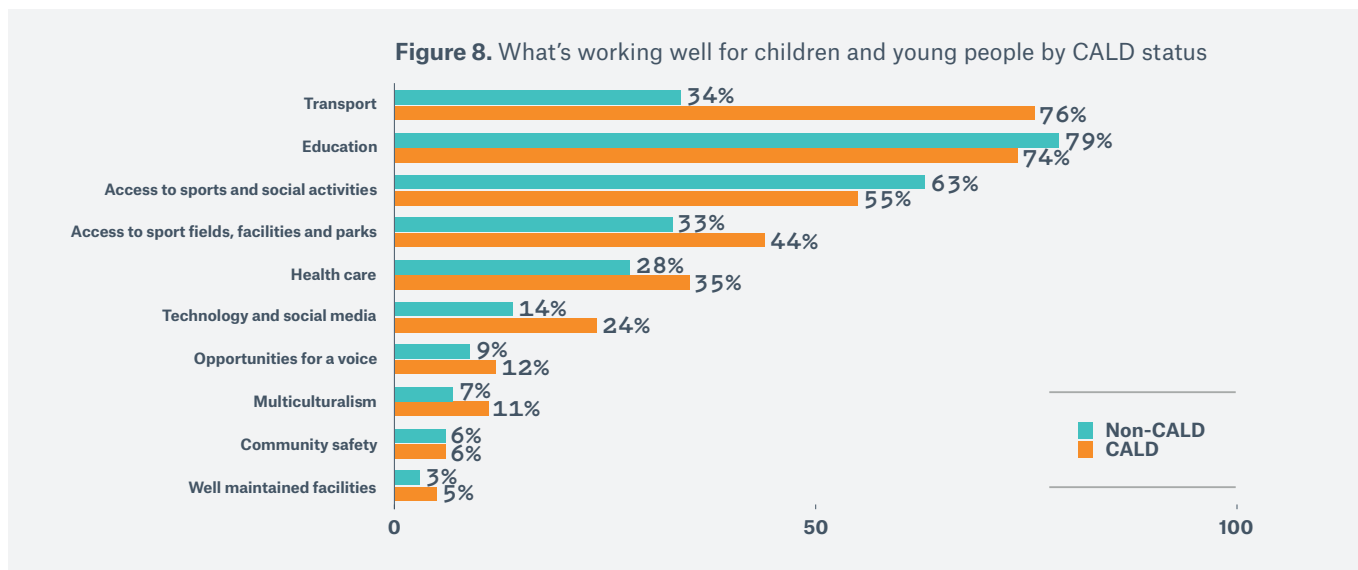
Differences between Sydney and the rest of NSW

There was little difference between children and young people living in Sydney and those living outside Sydney in terms of what was working well for all children and young people in NSW. The exception was that more children and young people living outside Sydney reported that **access to sports and social activities** was working well than those living in Sydney did (70.3% compared with 34.7%).



Differences between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people and non-CALD children and young people

Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) reported largely similar areas as working well to those from non-CALD backgrounds. The main area of difference was in relation to **public transport**, with CALD children and young people mentioning this area far more frequently than their non-CALD peers (76.0% compared with 34.4%).



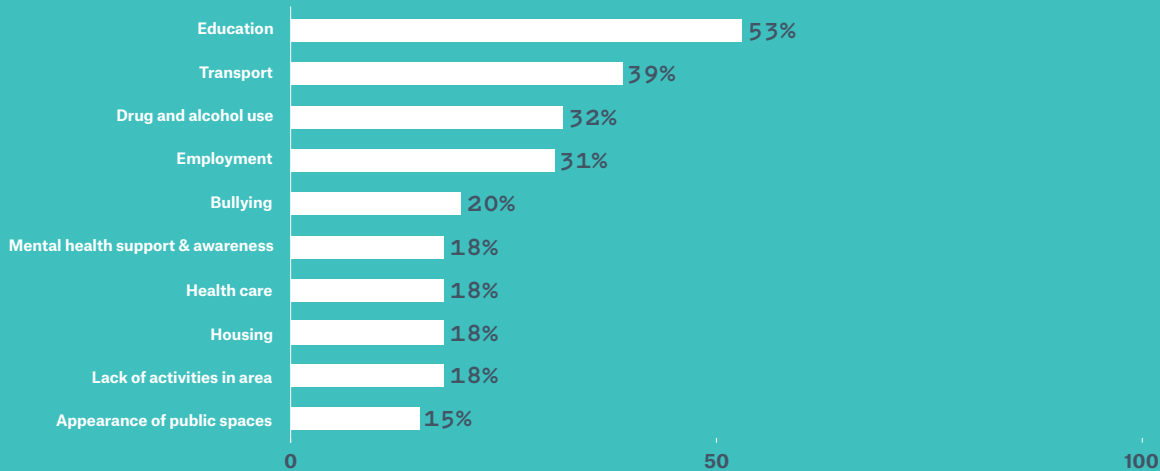
2

What's not working well for children and young people in NSW?

Overall findings

While **education** was the number one area identified as working well for children and young people, it was also most frequently reported as not working well for children and young people (53.2%) (Figure 9).

Figure 9. What's not working well for children and young people



Children and young people raised the following:

- Insufficient resources for public schools, rural schools and schools in disadvantaged areas
- There are not enough schools; class sizes are too big
- Too much pressure: homework; assignments, HSC experience
- Lack of subjects that prepare students for real life
- Inequity between private and public education
- Not enough tutoring/mentoring for students needing extra support
- Teacher quality: inexperienced; not respectful of students
- School hours to be varied (e.g. later start; longer days to have three day weekend).

"Some teachers get really annoyed at little kids for not following instructions and they keep forgetting. They're kids, they can't do everything right." Female, 0-10yrs

"There are lots of kids in our classes and she is too busy to help all of us." Female, 0-10yrs

"Less tests in lower grades of school, there are far too many tests at a young age, there are plenty in high school and University, so just let kids be kids." Male, 18-24yrs

"Increased education on things in life that are actually important, e.g. taxes and housing loans etc. We never learn the important stuff in school." Female, 11-17yrs

"The HSC is a terrible way of assessing peoples' potential and ability and causes a lot of stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems." Male, 11-17yrs

Almost two in five children and young people (38.5%) would like to see changes to **public transport**. In particular, they raised that:

- Transport is unreliable: either late or does not arrive
- There is not enough transport in rural areas and some metropolitan areas
- Transport is overcrowded: sometimes children and young people have to wait for the next bus; buses and trains are not frequent enough
- Transport is too expensive
- Bus drivers have negative attitudes towards young people
- Buses and trains are often not clean
- Feeling unsafe on public transport
- There is not enough transport for school students
- Young people should be able to use student passes for travel outside to and from school
- Public transport travel routes should be improved.

"I think that the public transport should be made easier and cheaper for children as it is very expensive and hard to get around sometimes." Female, 11-17yrs

"You can never rely on public transport." Female, 0-10yrs

"The public transport system. Too dangerous and not reliable enough." Female, 11-17yrs

"The transporting issues we have in our transport to school. Today the train was delayed so many people in my school missed exams." Male, 11-17yrs

"Trains need to cater for the large amounts of school children who use them in the morning and evening, ie stop skipping the stops where many high schools are located." Female 11-17yrs

Almost one in three children and young people raised **drug and alcohol use** as an issue (32.1%); closely followed by **employment** (31.5%). Young people frequently raised that drugs are easily accessible. Children and young people were also concerned about drug and alcohol usage by adults as well as by children and young people, noting that this makes them feel unsafe.

"The abuse of alcohol and drugs is becoming more frequent as young people have more access to them and find it more common and normal to use them illegally." Female, 11-17yrs

"The drug use that goes on in our local streets is absolutely ludicrous and needs to be managed by our governments." Female, 11-17yrs

"That young kids take drugs and alcohol." Male, 11-17yrs

"Access to drugs and alcohol appears to be getting easier. Alongside this, the safety of the community appears to be increasing in risk." Female, 18-24yrs

Concerns around employment included:

- Limited work opportunities for young people in general
- Lack of jobs in rural and regional areas
- Lack of opportunities for work placements, experience and apprenticeships
- Difficulty in gaining employment with no prior experience
- Youth and graduate wage is too low
- Difficulty for students (school and university) to find casual or part-time employment.

"Jobs are so hard to find, and most are low hours with low pay." Female, 18-24yrs

"The fact that no one is willing to hire and provide these hard working individuals with a chance to prove their ability, instead the focus is based on experience."

Female, 18-24yrs

"Too many graduates not getting high paying jobs they expected." Male, 18-24yrs

"Although I do have a job I believe there is not enough opportunities for teens to get jobs or resources to help find jobs for teens." Male, 11-17yrs

One in five children and young people raised **bullying** as a major issue. This included face to face and cyber-bullying. They discussed that not enough is being done in schools to stop bullying behaviour and that bullying programs currently in schools are not working for them.

"Bullying at school is reported but it's not dealt with, kids are still left to sort out their own problems and get hurt, teachers stand by and do nothing." Female, 0-10yrs

"Bullying is still a major part in schools. There seriously needs to be a crackdown on bullying policies so suicide and self-harm rates decrease." Male, 11-17yrs

"Despite many programs being in place to combat bullying issues etc, it is still a prominent issue for young people."

Female, 11-17yrs



Differences among groups of children and young people

Age differences

There were several noteworthy differences among the three age groups in terms of what was raised as not working well for children and young people. First, for children aged 0-10 years, **bullying** was the number one issue raised. In addition, this age group of children was more likely than the others to discuss **environmental issues** (37.2% compared with approximately 10% of both of the older age groups).

"People should be more environmentally friendly and worry about global warming."
0-10yrs

Children and young people aged 11-17 years were notably more likely than the other age groups to mention **housing** as an important issue (21.7% compared with less than 10% of both the other age groups):

"Housing prices - I am afraid for my future." Female, 11-17yrs

"With the current state of the job market and housing market, young NSW people may feel paranoid about their futures."
Male, 11-17yrs

Young people aged 18-24 years differed significantly in their responses compared with the two younger age groups. The three issues raised most as not working well for

them were: **employment** (55.2%), **drug and alcohol use** (44.4%) and **mental health support and awareness** (40.1%).

In addition, more than one-quarter of 18-24 year olds raised **discrimination and racism** (27.4%) and **youth crime** (26.1%) as not working well. These issues were not reported at all by the youngest age group and less frequently among the middle age group. Young people raised all forms of discrimination, including sexism, discrimination against LGBTQI youth, religious groups and against young people in general.

Finally, young people in the two older age groups raised a **lack of activities for young people** as not working well for them (19.5% 11-17yrs; 20.4% 18-24yrs). In contrast, this was mentioned by just under 10% of 0-10 year old children.

Figure 10. What's not working well for children and young people by age group

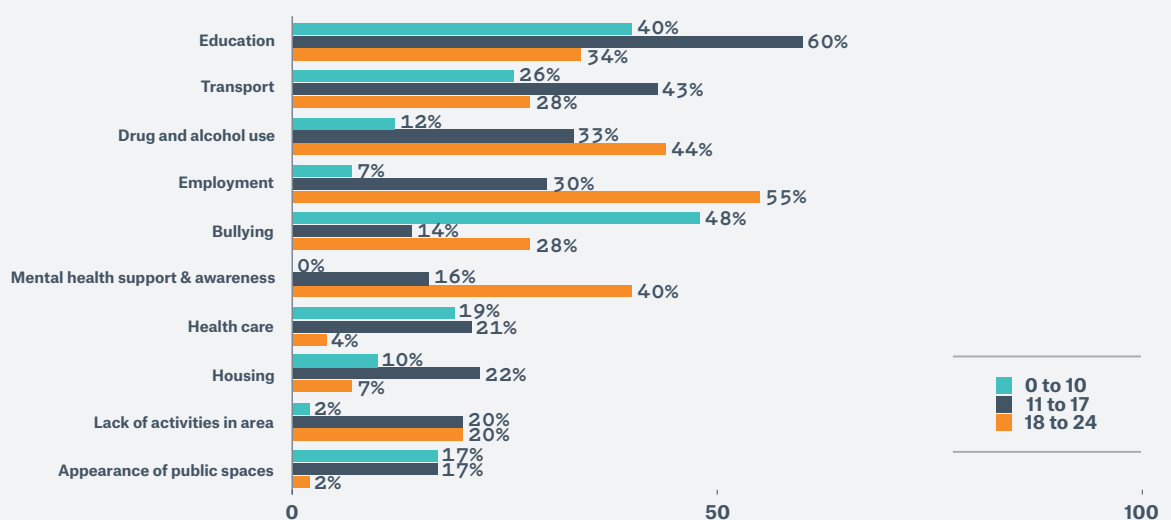


Figure 11. What's not working well for children and young people: 0-10 years

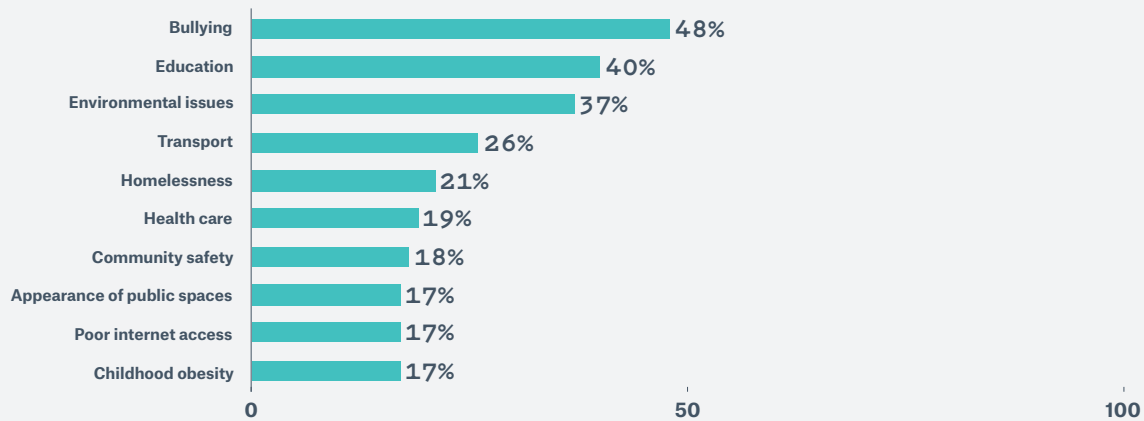


Figure 12. What's not working well for children and young people: 11-17 years

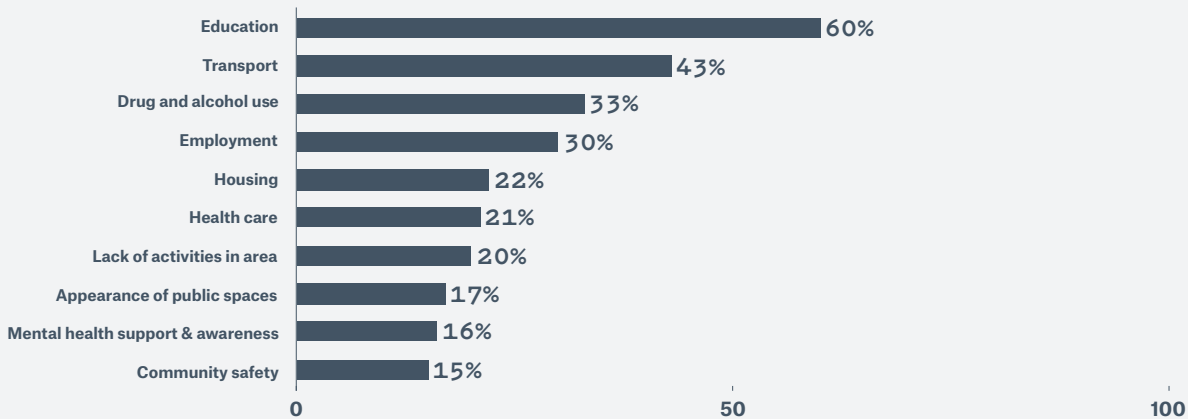
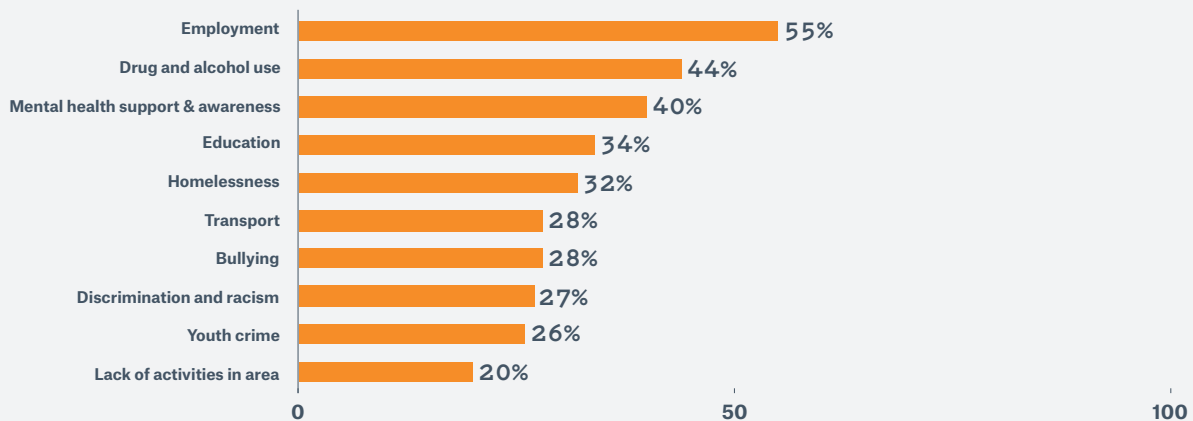


Figure 13. What's not working well for children and young people: 18-24 years



Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people

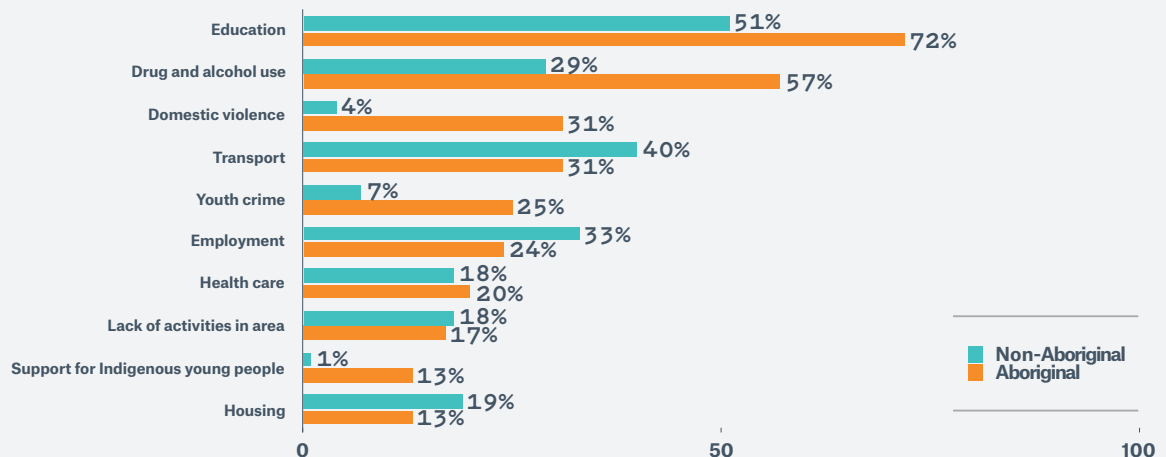
Aboriginal children and young people were more likely to report that **support for Aboriginal children and young people** was not working well than were non-Aboriginal children and young people (13.1% compared with 1.0%).

Aboriginal children and young people were markedly more likely to state that **domestic violence** was an issue for them compared with non-Aboriginal children and young people (30.6% compared with 3.9%), as well as **drug and alcohol use** (57.1% compared with 28.6%).

Youth crime was also seen as a big issue among one in four Aboriginal children and young people (25.1% Aboriginal compared with 7.2% non-Aboriginal children and young people).

Also noteworthy is that Aboriginal children and young people were considerably less likely to see mental health awareness and support as a big issue for children and young people in NSW compared with non-Aboriginal children and young people (5.7% Aboriginal compared with 20.0% non-Aboriginal).

Figure 14. What's not working well for children and young people: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

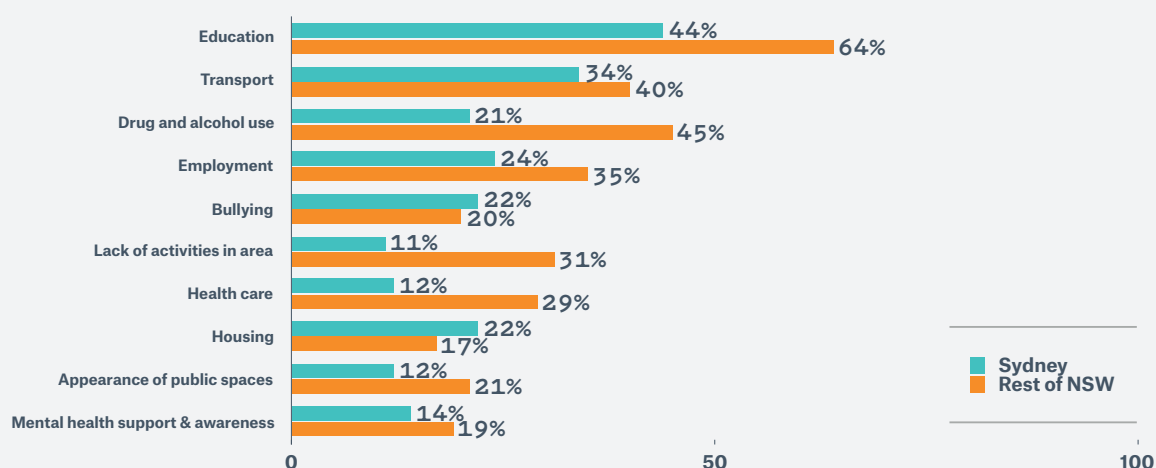


Differences between Sydney and the rest of NSW

Greater numbers of children and young people living outside of Sydney raised the following issues:

- **Education** (63.9% Rest of NSW/ 43.7% Sydney)
- **Drug and alcohol use** (45.0% Rest of NSW/ 21.3% Sydney)
- **Lack of activities in the area** (30.9% Rest of NSW/ 10.5% Sydney)
- **Employment** (34.8% Rest of NSW/ 24.4% Sydney)
- **Health care** (29.4% Rest of NSW/ 11.5% Sydney)
- **Appearance of public spaces** (21.1% Rest of NSW/ 12.2% Sydney).

Figure 15. What's not working well for children and young people by geographic location

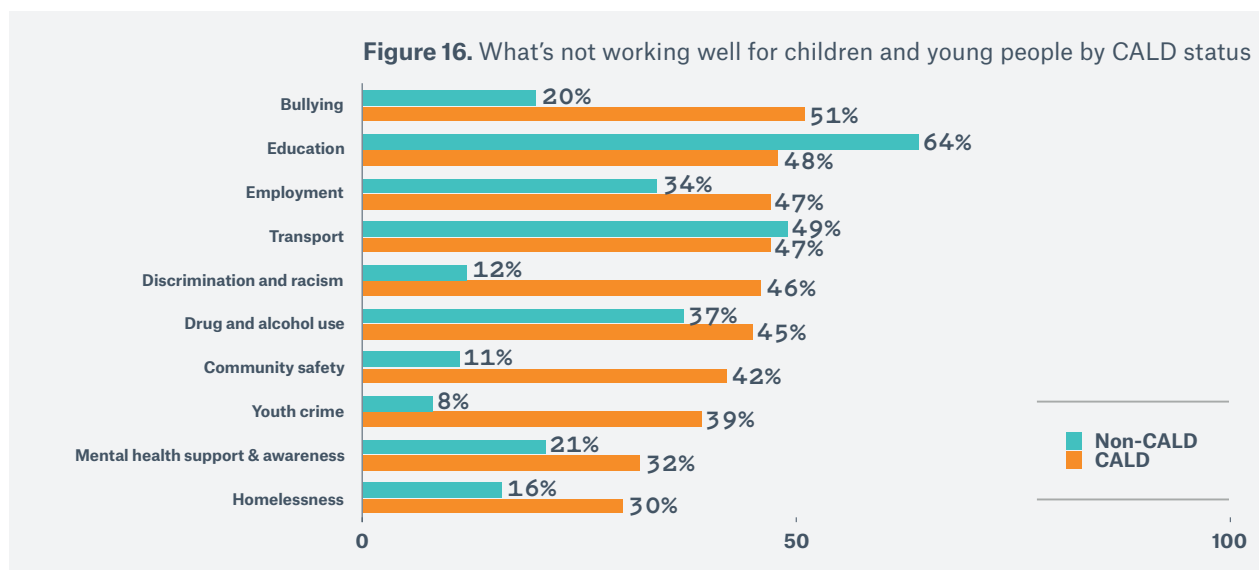


Differences between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people and non-CALD children and young people

Greater numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people raised the following areas as not working well for them, compared with non-CALD children and young people:

- **Bullying** (51.0% CALD/ 19.7% non-CALD)
- **Employment** (47.3% CALD/ 34.3% non-CALD)
- **Discrimination and racism** (45.7% CALD/ 12.4% non-CALD)
- **Community safety** (42.3% CALD/ 11.5% non-CALD)
- **Youth crime** (39.3% CALD/ 7.8% non-CALD)
- **Mental health support and awareness** (32.3% CALD/ 21.2% non-CALD)
- **Homelessness** (30.3% CALD/ 16.2% non-CALD).

“Sometimes people yell at us because we are Muslims. They are bigots but we just ignore them.” (F, 11-17yrs)

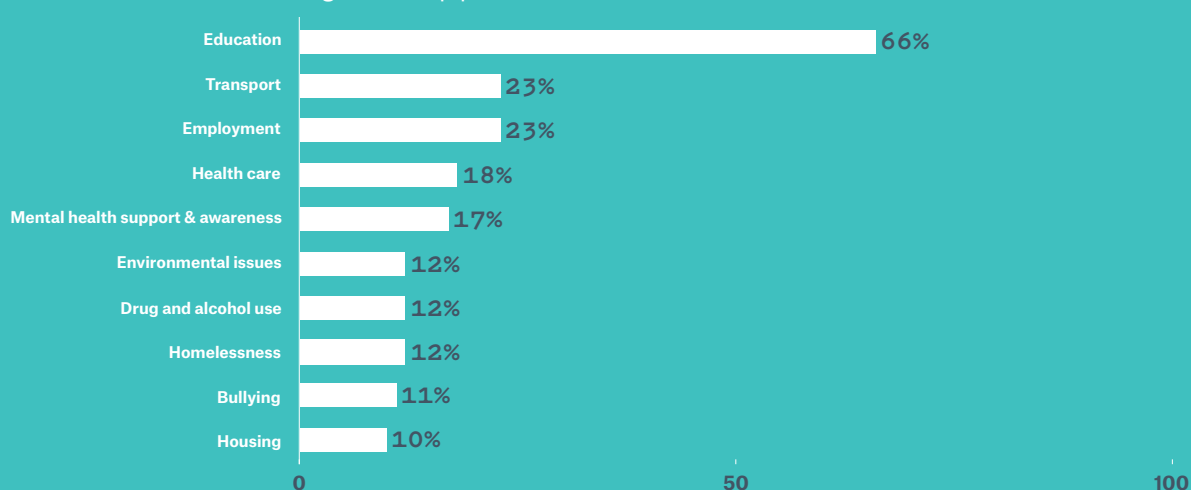


3 What are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on for children and young people?

Overall findings

Education was the number one priority raised by the total sample of children and young people (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on



Areas they asked the NSW Government to focus on included:

- More resources and funding to schools (including in rural areas)
- Improve the quality of teaching and education
- More life skills education in schools
- Reduce pressure and stress on high school students
- Variable school hours e.g. later start, later finish and three day weekend
- Reduce university fees
- More support for students who are struggling
- Less homework.

"Change the way education is taught to children. Teach them life skills." Male, 11-17

"Abolish homework requirements; more homework does not make a student understand the subject better."

Female, 11-17yrs

"Extra teaching support in class for children who can't keep up."

Female, 18-24yrs

"Revision of the HSC and the pressure that puts on youth." Female, 11-17yrs

"Making tertiary education more accessible to the masses not just those with the funds to do so." Female, 18-24yrs

Transport was the number two issue children and young people would like the NSW Government to focus on (23.4%), including:

- More frequent buses and trains: including more late night/early morning and weekend transport
- Reduce costs: all students, including university, should travel for free; all children and young people at school ages should travel for free
- School transport should reach a wider area (better travel routes)
- Public transport to arrive at scheduled times
- Improve transport in rural areas
- Improve security on public transport: more patrols, cameras
- Have student-only carriages on trains.

"Free transport for uni kids."

Female, 11-17yrs

"Better public transport - trains rarely stop at small stations near high schools, could at least make all stop trains in the morning and afternoon." Female, 11-17yrs

Employment was raised as a priority by 23.1% of the total sample of children and young people. Most of the specific issues raised were similar to those raised in the *what's not working well* discussions. Some additional areas for focus were:

- More access to information: how to get a job; jobs in high demand
- Youth training for employment: more programs to help young people be more employable, more work placements and internships in government departments
- More assistance for young people with no experience to obtain their first job
- Less discrimination against young people in the work place.

"Easy information about starting work and how taxes work." Male, 11-17yrs

"I think there should be more work training initiatives to help young people find employment." Female, 18-24yrs

"Programs that will allow young people to find employment, incentives for companies to hire teenagers." Male, 11-17yrs

"Provide more programs to make young people employable." Male, 18-24yrs



Differences among groups of children and young people

Age differences

While **education** was raised as the most important issue to fix by all three age groups, there were differences among the groups as to what the second and third most important issues were.

After education, children aged 0-10 years responded that **bullying** (27.5%) and **homelessness** (25.1%) were the most important things for the NSW Government to focus on. In contrast, children and young people aged 11-17 years raised **transport** (26.9%) and **employment** (21.8%) as the most important things to focus on after education. Young people aged 18-24 years also raised employment after education (40.4%) as well as **mental health awareness and support** (33.3%).

Figure 18. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on by age group

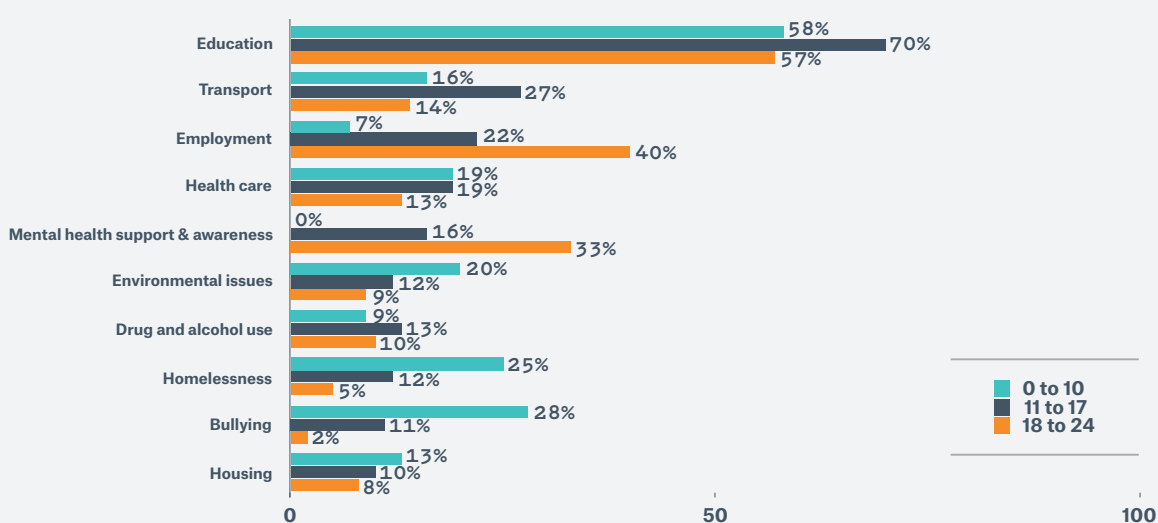


Figure 19. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on: 0-10 years

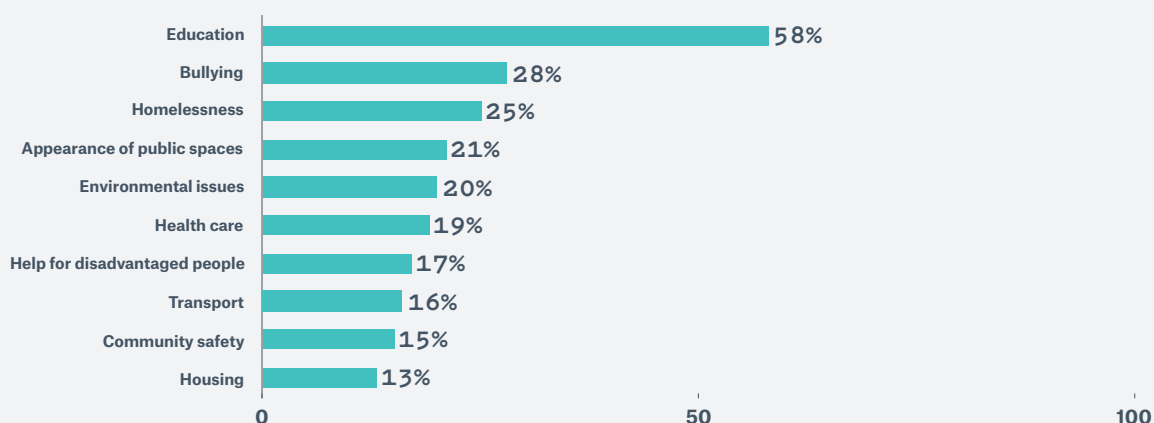


Figure 20. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on: 11-17 years

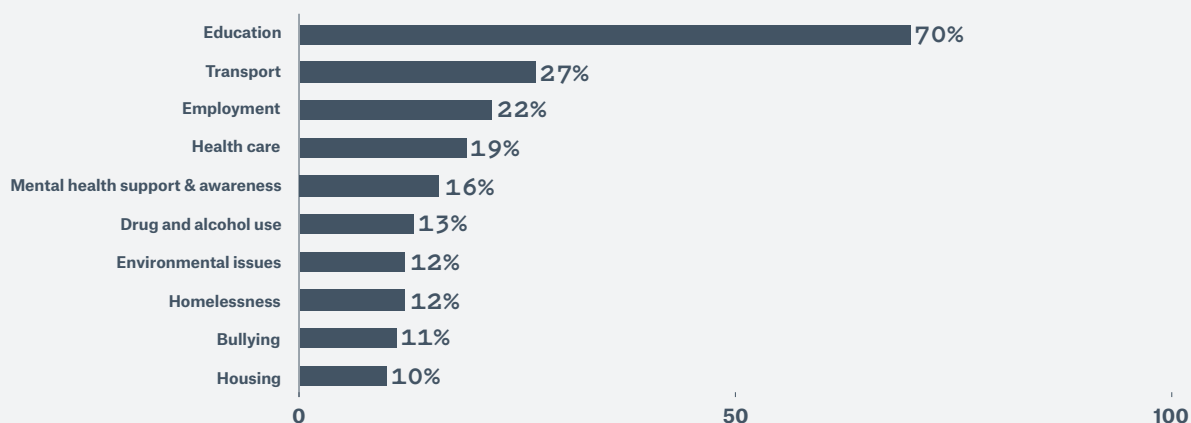
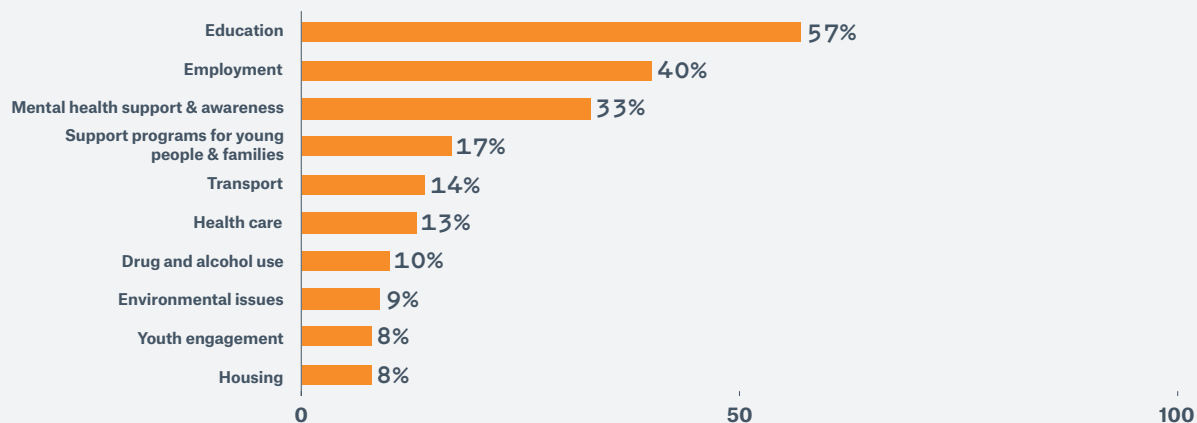


Figure 21. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on: 18-24 years

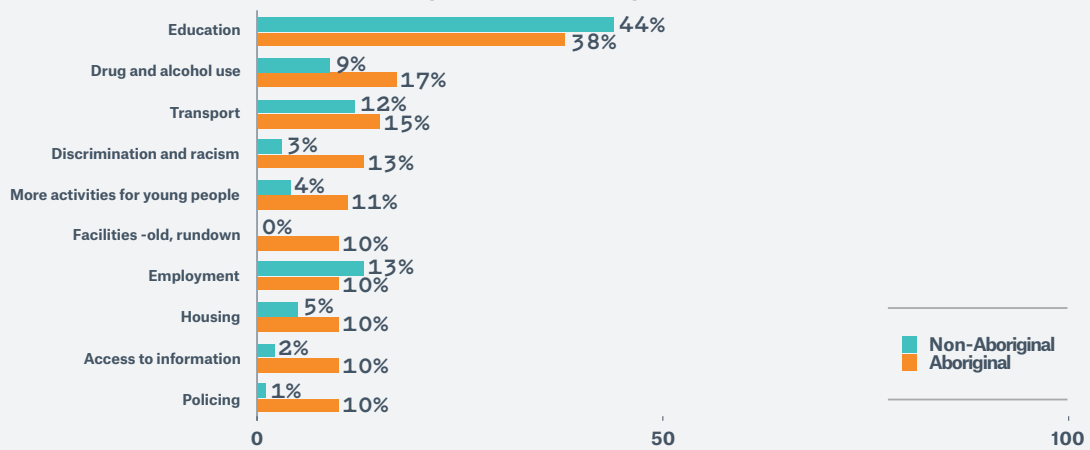


Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people

Aboriginal children and young people also raised **education** as the most important issue to fix for children and young people. However, in contrast to non-Aboriginal children and young people, they raised **drug and alcohol use** as the second biggest issue to fix for young people (16.9% Aboriginal compared with 8.8% non-Aboriginal).

Transport was the third biggest issue for Aboriginal children and young people, however this was very closely followed by **discrimination and racism**; an issue not seen as a top priority by non-Aboriginal children and young people (13.5% compared with 3.2%).

Figure 22. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on:
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal



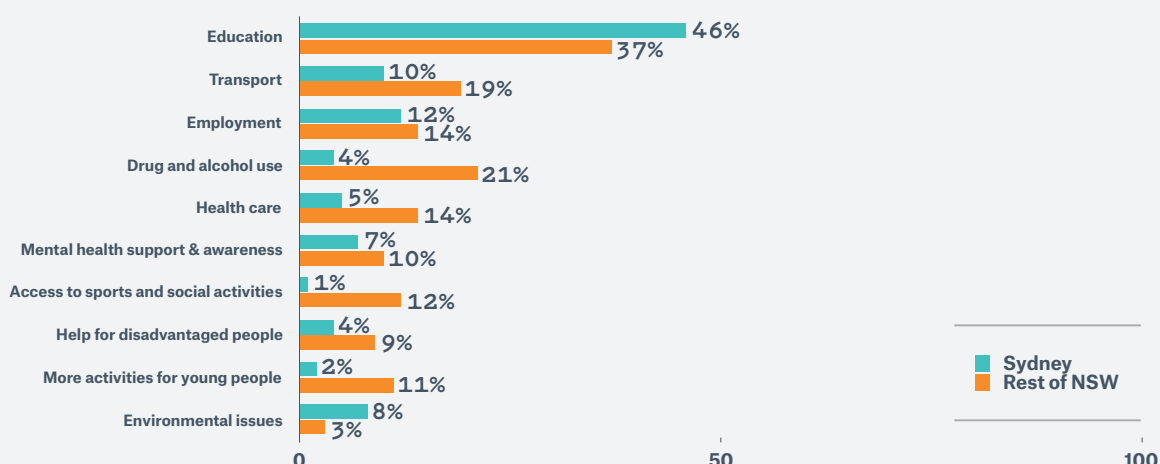
Differences between Sydney and the rest of NSW

Greater numbers of children and young people living outside of Sydney raised the following issues as most important for the NSW Government to focus on:

- **Transport** (18.7% Rest of NSW/ 9.6% Sydney)
- **Drug and alcohol use** (20.6% Rest of NSW/ 3.7% Sydney)
- **Health care** (13.9% Rest of NSW/ 5.4% Sydney)
- **Access to sports and social activities** (11.8% Rest of NSW/ 1.4% Sydney)
- **More activities for young people** (10.5% Rest of NSW/ 1.6% Sydney).



Figure 23. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on by geographic location

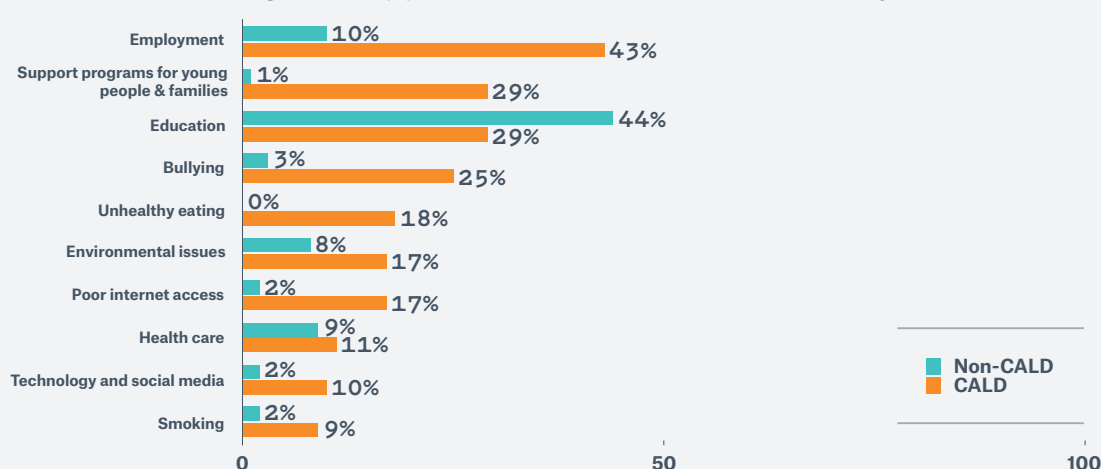


Differences between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people and non-CALD children and young people

As shown in Figure 24, children and young people from CALD backgrounds raised some issues as important for NSW Government to prioritise that were not reported by as many non-CALD children and young people. These include:

- **Support programs for children and young people and families** (29.1% CALD/ 0.6% non-CALD)
- **Unhealthy eating** (18.4% CALD/ 0.1% non-CALD)
- **Environmental issues** (16.9% CALD/ 7.7% non-CALD)
- In addition, markedly more CALD children and young people reported **employment** (43.4% CALD/ 10.0% non-CALD) and **bullying** (25.3% CALD/ 3.0% non-CALD) as issues to be prioritised than did non-CALD children and young people.

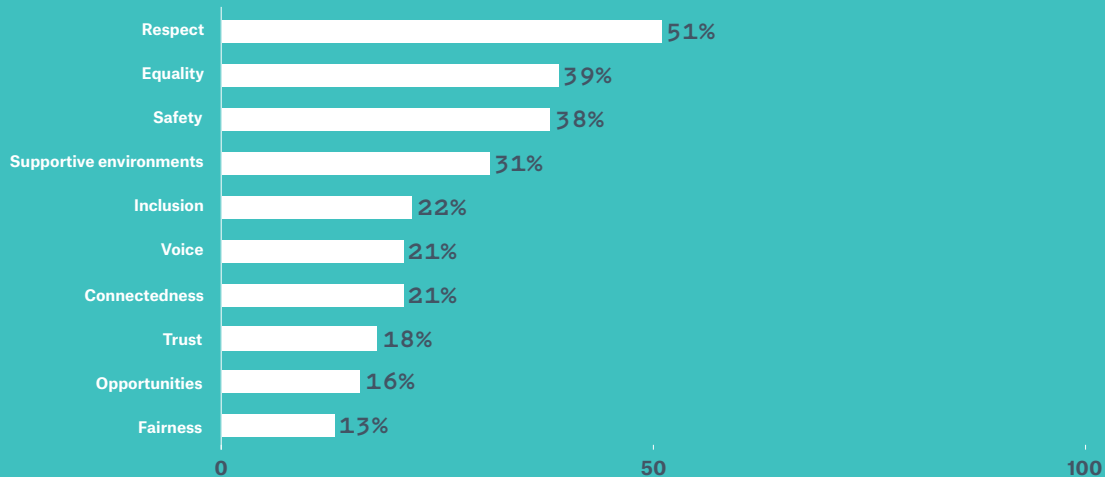
Figure 24. Top priorities for NSW Government to focus on by CALD status



What are the qualities of a good society for children and young people?

Overall findings

Figure 25. Qualities of a good society for children and young people



When asked to describe the qualities of a good society for children and young people, the most common response was **respect** (51.1%):

"We should all listen respectfully. It does not matter if you are young or old. Your ideas may be very good and are worth listening to... They don't always have to agree but at least let them be heard."

Female, 0-10yrs

"I would like them [adults] to think of me as a role model. I would like to be a leader even though I am only 11. I would like to be respected and I will respect other people."

Male, 11-17yrs

"Adults to treat children with respect, all children should have the right of opinion, their opinion should be taken with respect and seriousness."

Male, 11-17yrs

Children and young people also desire a society that values **equality** (39.5%):

"Adults and children should be treated equally, not treated differently because of age."

Female, 11-17yrs.

"A good society for children and young people provides equal opportunities of young people regardless of their background."

Male, 11-17yrs

And **safety** (37.8%), specifically:

- No crime or violence
- No bullying
- Children playing on the street with no fear of stranger danger
- High security.

Just under one-third of children and young people spoke about the importance of **supportive environments** (31.1%), and in particular, “helping each other when in need”, feeling “encouraged”, “cared for”, “loved”, “understood” and “people to turn to for advice.”

Around one in five children and young people raised **inclusion** (21.7%), **voice** (21.1%) and **connectedness** (20.5%) as important qualities of a good society to live in:

“A good society for young people to grow up in is an accepting, multicultural society that accepts and encourages differences, not highlighting it then shaming it.”

Female, 11-17yrs

“Get more youth involved with the decisions, around where I live adults make all the decisions for us and nothing happens.” Female, 15-17yrs

“Listening to children and taking their opinions seriously.” Male 11-17yrs

“Making new friends, being social and having fun.” Female, 11-17yrs

“The sense of belonging to one another.” Female, 11-17yrs



Differences among groups of children and young people

Age differences

Children and young people did not differ by age group according to what they believed are the most important qualities of a good society for all children and young people. However, the importance of “opportunities” and “inclusion” was raised more frequently by the two older groups, while the youngest group raised “honesty” and being “friendly” more often.

Figure 26. Qualities of a good society for children and young people by age group

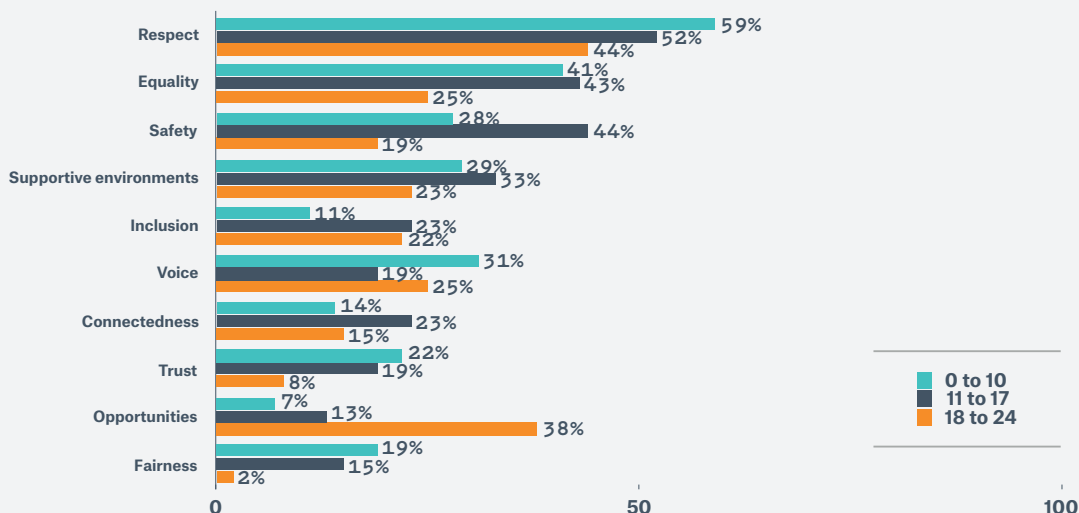


Figure 27. Qualities of a good society for children and young people: 0-10 years

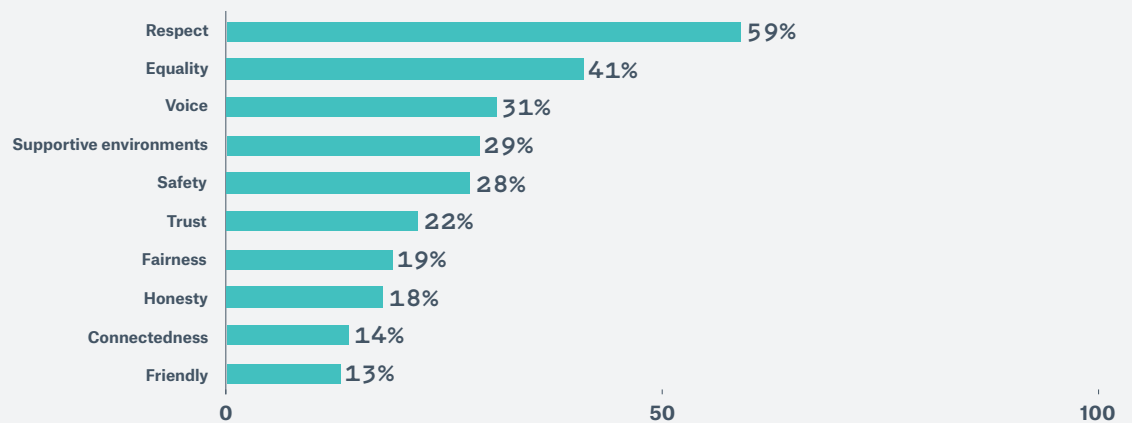


Figure 28. Qualities of a good society for children and young people: 11-17 years

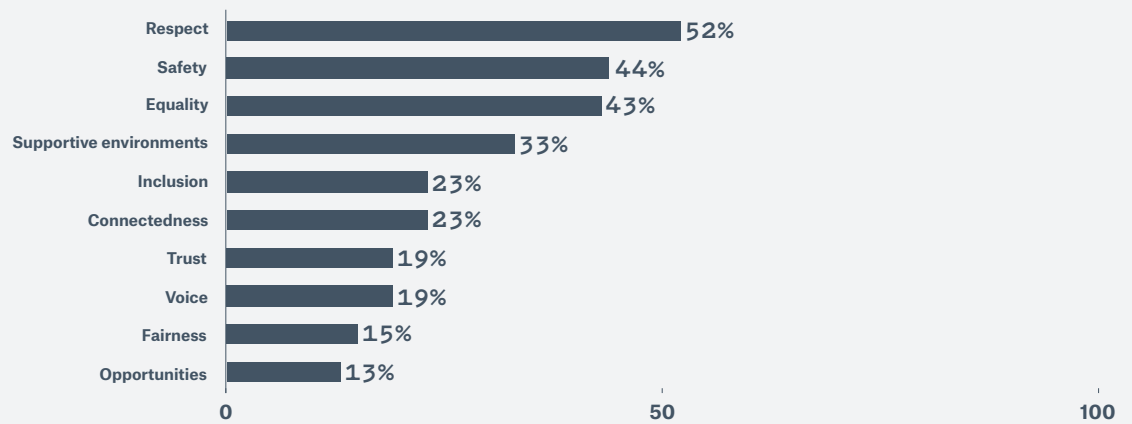
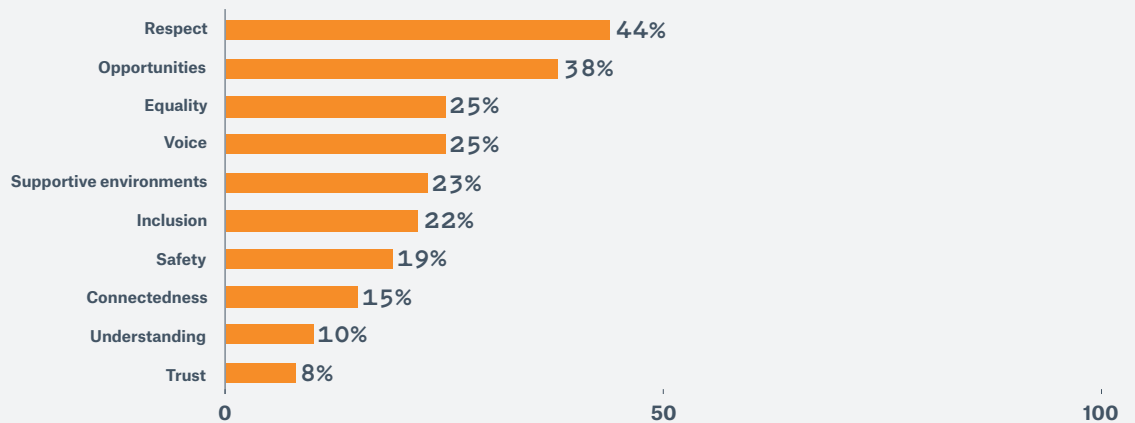


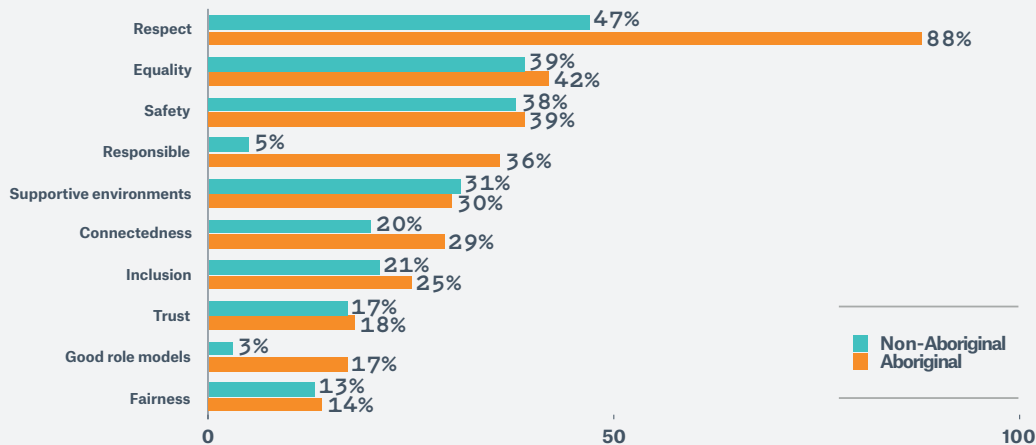
Figure 29. Qualities of a good society for children and young people: 18-24 years



Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people raised “respect” as the most important quality of a good society for children and young people, although a markedly higher percentage of Aboriginal children and young people did so (87.8% Aboriginal compared with 47.0% non-Aboriginal). Aboriginal children and young people placed greater emphasis on being “responsible” and having “good role models” as important qualities, while non-Aboriginal children and young people were more likely to raise “voice”.

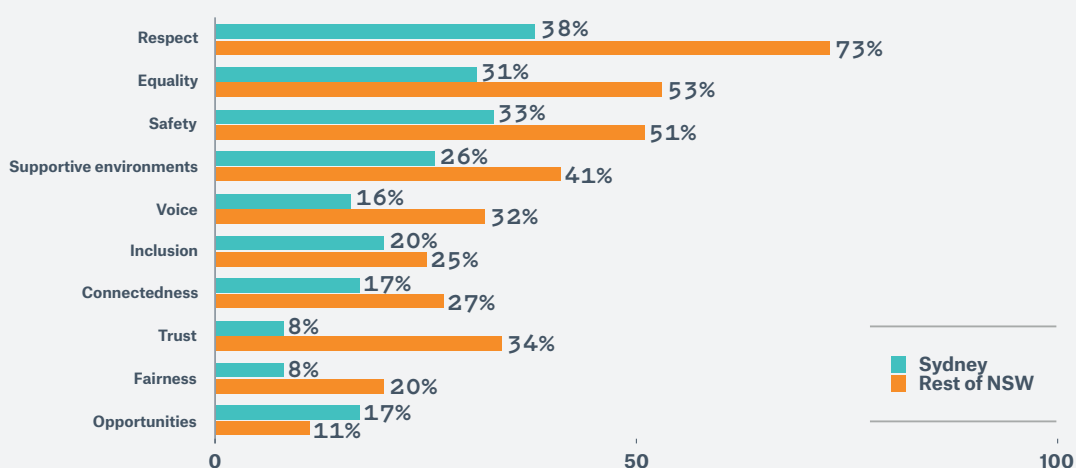
Figure 30. Qualities of a good society for children and young people: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal



Differences between Sydney and the rest of NSW

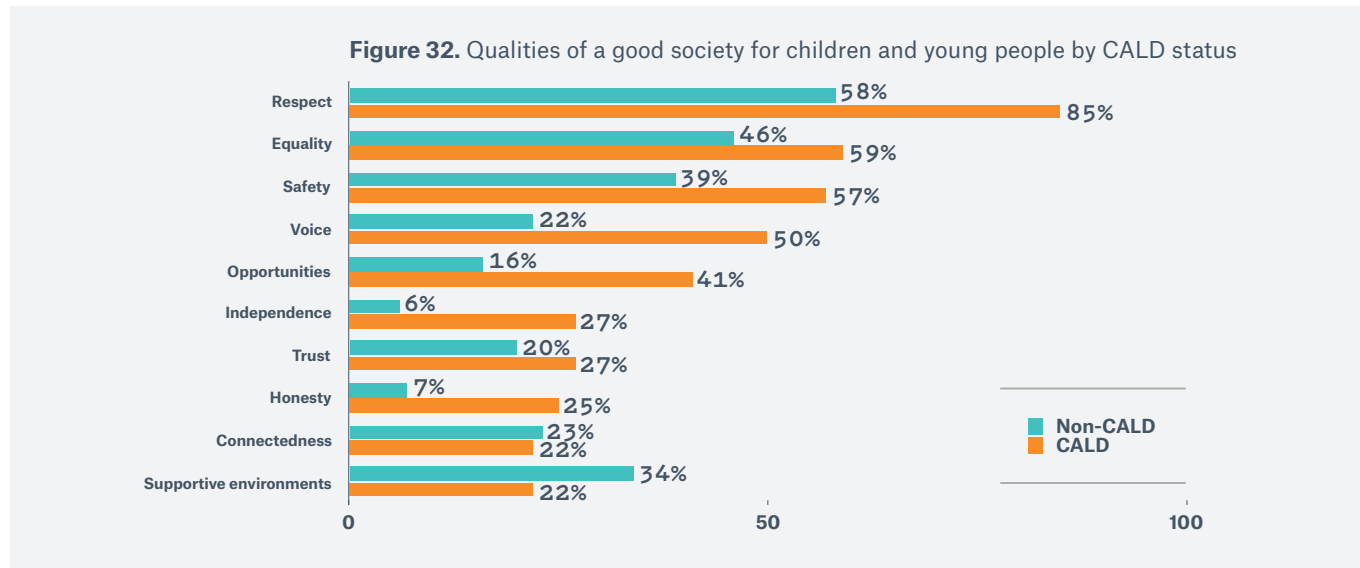
In general, children and young people raised the same qualities of a good society regardless of where they lived.

Figure 31. Qualities of a good society for children and young people by geographic location



Differences between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people and non-CALD children and young people

Children and young people from CALD and non-CALD backgrounds raised the same things as qualities of a good society for them. With the exception of “connectedness” and “supportive environments”, each quality was reported more frequently by children and young people from CALD backgrounds.



Methods

The aim of the consultations with children and young people was to inform the development of the three-year whole of government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People.

Developing the questions

We initially developed seven questions to explore what children and young people liked most about being a child or young person in NSW, what their major difficulties were, and what they thought is needed to improve their lives and the lives of all children and young people in NSW. These questions were developed in consultation with the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

We also trialled these questions with members of the former Commission for Children and Young People Advisory Group.

Feedback from these pilots highlighted that some questions were repetitive and that more explanation about the process was needed to provide context for answering the questions. It was also clear that young people found it easier to start with the positively worded questions (i.e. what is good in their lives) and then move to the negatives.

Following the pilots, we developed a brief PowerPoint presentation to explain to children and young people what the Advocate for Children and Young People does; that the purpose of the consultation was to help develop the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People; how Government works; the different areas that State Government is responsible for; and what a strategic plan is. This introduction helped to provide context for children and young people to respond to the consultation questions.

We were also able to reduce these consultation questions to three:

- 1. What is working well for children and young people in NSW?**
- 2. What is not working well for children and young people in NSW?**
- 3. What are the top three things you think the NSW Government should do to improve the lives of children and young people?**

However, we felt that there was a further question needed to elicit themes for the strategic plan. We therefore included the following fourth question:

- 4. What are the qualities of a good society for children and young people?**

We included the following prompts for each question, for children and young people that required extra assistance to respond:

- 1. What's working well and what's not working well:**
 - Things you might like to think about are: where you live, activities you do, facilities you use.
- 2. Top three priorities:**
 - If you were the leader of NSW, what do you think would be the most important things to fix first?
 - What are the things that would make the most difference to your life if they were improved or changed?
- 3. Qualities of a good society:**
 - How should children and young people be treated by adults and organisations?
 - How do you like others to behave towards you/ think of you?

Recruiting children and young people

Given that the NSW Strategic Plan is for all children and young people aged 0-24 years, it was important to consult with children and young people from all different backgrounds throughout NSW. Further, given the function of the Advocate to give special attention to vulnerable children and young people, effort was made to over-sample children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children and young people were recruited from the following:

- 1. NSW primary and secondary schools** – articles were placed in school newsletters inviting schools to participate. We also directly contacted schools via email and phone.
- 2. Youth services, clubs and groups** – we met with youth organisations across NSW and invited children and young people associated with these groups and services to participate in consultations. We also attended youth events run by these organisations and consulted at these events. Some groups and services that helped to facilitate consultations included Outside School Hours Care, Police Citizens Youth Clubs, Multicultural Youth Affairs Network, Girl Guides and Scouts.
- 3. Universities** – articles inviting university students to participate were placed in student organisation newsletters. We also consulted with university students by making direct contact with university lecturers.
- 4. Preschool centres** – very young children were invited to participate through preschool centres. These consultations were facilitated by the preschool teachers.
- 5. Advocate website** – children and young people were also invited to participate through the Advocate's website.

Obtaining consent

Valid consent rests on the following principles: it must be voluntary; informed; current and renegotiable. In adherence with these principles, children and young people's participation was always voluntary. Children and young people over preschool age were given information sheets and consent forms enabling them to make an informed decision as to whether they wanted to take part. Preschool children gave verbal consent to their teachers.

In addition, parents of children under 18 years of age were also asked to provide passive parental consent for their child to participate. That is, they signed the consent form if they did not want their child to be involved.

The information sheet included, in plain English, information about the purpose of the consultation, what their participation would involve, how long it would take, the voluntary nature of the consultation, what would happen with the information they provided and whether or not they would be identified as a result of their participation (depending on whether photos or video footage were being taken).

Data collection techniques

The development of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People provided us with the opportunity to trial several different methods of consulting with children and young people. These included:

Group consultations facilitated by Advocate staff

The Advocate and staff of the Advocate ran consultations in schools and youth clubs and organisations. The groups ranged in size from a minimum of three children and young people to a maximum of 150 children and young people. For groups larger than 20, we divided children and young people into smaller groups of approximately eight to enable discussion.

Each group consultation began with the Advocate playing the PowerPoint presentation and introducing the purpose of the consultation.

We also developed a handout that described the different areas of State Government (i.e. education, transport, health etc.). Children and young people were able to refer to this handout when discussing the four questions.

The Advocate then asked each question, one at a time. Children and young people were given time to discuss each question in their groups and write down their answers. They then fed back their ideas to the rest of the group.

In initial consultations, groups were provided with Post-it notes to record their ideas. During larger group discussion, the Advocate collected the Post-it notes and grouped them in themes on a white board. This proved to be quite time consuming, as students came up with many ideas, resulting in many Post-it notes to collect and group. As a result, for later consultations, each group of students was provided with a sheet of butchers paper to record their responses.

During group discussion, Advocate staff recorded children and young people's

answers on the PowerPoint. The PowerPoint presentation ended with two slides titled "Our Plan for Children and Young People in NSW". These slides contained the four questions with space for recording participants' responses. In the introduction to the consultation, the Advocate told children and young people that they would be creating their own plan for children and young people. They were also told that Advocate staff would consolidate their responses and send them back their final plan to keep.

Learnings from group consultations

1. The most successful consultations were those that were large enough to divide students into groups for discussion prior to giving their responses. This gave children and young people time to think and discuss their ideas with each other.
2. Consultations also worked better with children and young people when teachers or youth workers stated to children and young people to express their opinions freely and demonstrated their trust in the children and young people by not interacting with them and allowing them to be focused on the Advocate's team while they participated in the consultation. This resulted in children and young people being less inhibited. In addition, this meant that their ideas were truly their own and not influenced by teachers' or youth workers' opinions. When staff did remain in the room, it was important to ask them not to pass on their ideas to children and young people.

Classroom consultations

Schools were also given the opportunity for teachers to facilitate the consultation themselves. This consultation was identical to that facilitated by the Advocate.

The Advocate provided teacher facilitators with the materials necessary to run the consultation.

A facilitator's guide was developed for teachers. This included information about the

Advocate, the purpose of the consultation and step-by-step instructions for running the consultation. Along with the facilitator's guide, teachers were also provided with the PowerPoint explaining the work of the Advocate, what governments do and what a strategic plan is, as well as the PowerPoint in handout form and the handout of the different areas that State Government is responsible for.

When a school expressed interest in running a classroom consultation, they were emailed all the materials needed to facilitate it. The coordinating teacher was given time to read the materials. Following this, a phone conversation was arranged with the teacher and Advocate staff to answer any questions the teacher had.

At the conclusion of the consultation, the teacher emailed back the PowerPoint with the "class plan" for NSW children and young people.

Learnings from classroom consultations

Schools are extremely busy places and are often presented with requests from different organisations to consult with students. For this reason, it is important to develop relationships with schools over time and not just rely on recruiting students through school newsletters.

Peer to peer consultations

We also offered organisations the opportunity for children and young people to be trained to facilitate the consultations with their peers. Several organisations participated including the Outside School Hours Care sector, Youth Advisory Council and Settlement Services International.

For some groups, the Advocate trained children and young people directly. For others, the Advocate trained organisational staff to then train their children and young people.

A peer facilitator's guide was developed for training, which was similar to that produced for the classroom consultations. It explained the step-by-step process for running the

consultation. Training also included providing some tips for how to run a good consultation (for example, giving all participants equal opportunity to speak, how to make sure the consultation stays on track).

For peer to peer consultations, children and young people were given an answer sheet to record participants' responses.

Learnings from peer to peer consultations

Feedback from peer facilitators was that they really enjoyed the process. However, some of the youngest facilitators (10 years of age) found it somewhat challenging to run the consultation and write down the answers at the same time. Perhaps pairs of peer consultants would be a more suitable option, especially for younger children, where one is responsible for asking the questions and the other records the responses.

We also found that some peer facilitators found it difficult to keep the consultation running on time. In our future training with children and young people, we will allocate more time for them to facilitate practice consultations and provide them with different scenarios of what can play out during a consultation.

Individual surveys

Children and young people were also able to complete the consultation individually via an online survey. The survey was able to be accessed through the Advocate's website. In addition to individual children and young people accessing the survey, several organisations and schools also chose this option. For such groups, we were able to create unique landing pages to the survey and provide each group with their unique collated survey results.

Postcards

Some organisations were keen for their children and young people to be involved in the consultations, although for various reasons it was not possible to conduct group consultations or conduct the survey online. For example, the Office of Sport ran school holiday sport and recreation camps for children and young people in the September school

informed on the progress of the NSW Strategic Plan.

We also used the postcards at some large events, including the Girl Guides Sleepout and events hosted by the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network. The Advocate and staff of the Advocate attended these events and gave children and young people some background about the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People to assist with filling out the postcard.

Learnings from postcards

Postcards were extremely useful for engaging organisations that were time-poor. Having an option that was quick and easy to administer enabled many more children and young people to engage in the process.

Polling

We engaged a research consultancy to administer the online survey through an online community for young

people. These young people (14-24 years of age) were sent an invitation to participate in the survey via an email with a link to the online survey.

Learnings from polling

Results obtained through polling were comparable to those obtained using the other methodologies.



holidays. An alternative method was needed to enable these children and young people to take part.

We therefore developed a postcard that included two of the four consultation questions – what did they think was most important for the NSW Government to focus on to improve children and young people's lives, and what are the qualities of a good society for children and young people.

Postcards were sent to organisations, along with a summary of the purpose of the consultations for staff to convey to children and young people. Completed postcards were then returned to the Advocate.

Additionally, the postcards gave children and young people the option of providing their email address if they wished to be kept

Variations for specific groups and youth events

In several instances it was necessary to adapt our data collection methods to meet the needs of specific groups of children and young people.

1. Data collection with very young children

Feedback from children aged three to five years was sought via five UnitingCare Child and Family Services. The consultations were conducted by the child care workers in each centre, as they have expertise in working with young children and the children had already established relationships with them.

Children answered the same four questions, although the methodology employed differed slightly. Given their age, it was important to conduct the consultation over a number of sessions using a more flexible format. Children were able to give their responses using a variety of mediums; including drawing pictures and making story books.

The child care workers were provided all the consultation materials and asked to adapt them for use with preschool aged children.

Learnings from consultations with very young children

Working with very young children requires a specific skill set. When running consultations with preschool aged children it is essential to draw on the expertise of those who regularly work with young children.

2. PCYC Nations of Origin Tournament

Nations of Origin is a multi-faceted sport, education and cultural leadership program which culminates during NAIDOC week annually. The Rugby League 7s and Football 5s tournament has over 96 teams participating representing 27 Aboriginal Nations from across NSW and ACT.

The Advocate was invited to conduct consultations at this tournament. PCYC created a timetable for young people to visit

the Advocate in their teams at a specific time during the day when they were not scheduled to play.

To prepare for these consultations, we hired a marquee and chairs. The marquee was set up on the outskirts of the football fields. We also brought with us large easels and butchers paper. We knew in advance that four teams would come through the marquee at a time. Chairs were arranged in four separate circles and the Advocate and staff conducted one group each per session.

Young people's responses to each of the four questions were written up on the butcher's paper, either by the facilitator, or by a young person in the group if they wished.

We also thought it was important to offer a small token of appreciation for the young people who took time out from their tournament to take part in our consultations. They were each given a set of earphones, which proved to be extremely popular.

Learnings from the day

These consultations worked extremely well, largely because PCYC scheduled them into the event. Young people came through with their teams at specific times throughout the day.

3. Girl Guides Sleep Out

The Girl Guides hold an annual sleep out at Taronga Zoo. This event is attended by hundreds of girl guides from across NSW. The Advocate and several staff members set up a table at the event and the girls were invited to complete the consultation postcards.

As girls approached the table, the Advocate or a staff member told small groups about the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People and why their feedback was so important.

ACYP staff also distributed postcards to girls as they were lining up waiting to enter the grounds of the zoo.

Providing feedback to children and young people

When involving children and young people in decision-making, it is crucial to provide them with feedback about how their information was used.

Data was analysed after each consultation. Children and young people, and the organisation they were associated with, were provided with a summary of their consultation results within a few days of their consultation. This was presented as their own “Plan” for children and young people in NSW.

The Advocate has also committed to keeping all children and young people and organisations updated on the progress of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People. This will ensure that children and young people will be able to see how their ideas have helped to shape the Plan.



Coding

All data obtained during the consultations with children and young people were entered verbatim into an Excel spreadsheet. A coding scheme was developed using the themes identified in each of the four questions.

Education

What's working well?

- Access to good quality education
- Good extracurricular activities
- School caters well to students from different backgrounds
- Extra support for students e.g. homework centres, mentoring
- Good resources/facilities
- Good choice of subjects
- Range of good schools in area/choice
- Variety of school sports available
- Good/Supportive school counsellors
- Everyone has the opportunity to receive an education
- Good student-teacher relations
- Non-mainstream education
- Feel safe at school
- Access to free education
- Drug education at school
- Education scholarships
- Being with friends
- Career advice and work experience
- Young teachers
- Clontarf
- Good food variety in canteen
- Leadership opportunities
- Student voice

- Initiatives to keep young people in school
- Good bullying policies.

What's not working well?

- Not enough schools – overcrowded, classes too big
- School counsellor not present enough
- Not enough learning about different cultures
- School toilets not clean
- Poor internet access
- Rules not strict enough/ no consequences
- Don't feel safe at school
- Boys have more opportunities than girls eg Clontarf, sports
- Teacher quality - impatient, not respectful of students, inexperienced
- School canteens -unhealthy and expensive, not enough choice
- Not enough life/practical skills education
- Anti-bullying programs not working
- Not enough tutoring/mentoring for students needing help
- Too much pressure
- Inequity in education
- Not enough funding/resources for public, rural and disadvantaged schools
- HSC experience/ATAR system
- Not enough places to study at school
- NAPLAN

- Truancy
- School hours – too early / change hours so can have three day weekend
- Young people disengaged from learning
- Too much discipline
- Limited access to opportunities/further education in rural areas
- Too much homework/assignments
- Not enough school sport.

What are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on?

- Improve quality of teaching and education
- More help for students who are disengaged from learning
- More resources/funding to schools (in general)
- More resources/funding to rural schools
- More life skills and interactive education
- Cheaper school fees
- More scholarships
- No extra costs for public education
- Healthier and cheaper canteen food
- Variable school hours: shorter/start later, end later/or longer days with three day weekend
- More support for students struggling
- Sex and drug education (starting in primary school)
- School toilets
- Less homework
- Update syllabuses
- Reduce pressure/stress
- Teach more about Aboriginal culture
- More teachers to rural areas
- More discipline
- Reduce class sizes
- More male teachers

- Schoolbags too heavy
- More space.

Transport

What's working well?

- Good travel concessions or free travel for students
- Opal card system good
- Good public transport system
- Buses accessible
- Free shuttle buses in some areas (e.g. Wollongong)
- Feel safe on public transport
- Good that there are buses just for school students
- Train system good, fast
- RTA safe driving courses/road safety
- Free family travel Sundays
- Good disabled access on public transport.

What's not working well?

- Unreliable – late or don't come
- Not enough public transport in rural areas
- Buses/trains not frequent enough
- Too expensive
- Bus drivers rude to young people
- Not clean
- Feel unsafe on public transport
- Overcrowded, can't always get on
- Too much traffic
- Can't use student passes for travel outside to and from school
- Not enough transport for school students
- Wi-Fi doesn't work
- Improve travel routes
- Road safety/unsafe driving

- Bad roads
- All public transport should be free for students.

What are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on?

- More buses and trains
- Reduce cost
- Better travel routes
- Reliability – arrive on time
- Better transport in rural areas
- Safety on public transport
- Free transport for all young people
- All school and uni students should travel for free
- Better roads
- Improve road safety/driving
- Nicer bus drivers
- Student only transport (student train carriages; separate buses for each school)
- Reduce traffic
- Cleaner public transport
- More late night/early morning and weekend transport.

Employment

What's not working well?

- Limited work opportunities for young people/not enough jobs (in general)
- Lack of opportunities for work placements/experience (esp. in rural areas)
- Lack of jobs in rural/regional areas
- Hard to get work with no prior experience – hard to get foot in the door
- Youth and graduate wage too low
- Hard for young people to find casual/PT employment (esp. after amount of school / university hours)

- Not enough apprenticeships
- Not enough assistance for young people to find jobs
- Employees chose younger teenagers over older ones (can pay them less)
- Young people not aware of their rights with regards to employment
- Job application process is difficult.

What are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on?

- More job opportunities for young people (in general)
- More access to information about how to get a job, jobs that are in demand etc.)
- Youth training for employment, more programs to help young people be more employable, more work placements/ internships in government departments
- Help young people with no experience to get their first jobs
- More jobs for young teenagers/more jobs for school students /after school and part time jobs
- Less discrimination against young people in work
- More job opportunities in rural areas
- More apprenticeships
- Better pay for young people/increase minimum wage
- Reduce wait times for travel to job opportunities
- Not enough employment opportunities for disadvantaged young people
- Lower minimum working age
- More jobs for parents
- Provide incentives for companies to hire teenagers
- More jobs that don't require completing Year 12
- More employment for full time university

students who don't have flexible working hours

- Encourage more young people to start their own business and help them.

Health care

What's working well?

- Medicare, free health services, bulk billing
- Vaccination programs
- Good doctors
- Good quality and cheap health care
- Health care facilities improving
- Government funding for hospitals
- Choice of public or private health care
- Free dental care for rural young people
- Good children's hospitals
- Young people can use Medicare without parents' knowledge - autonomy, confidentiality.

What's not working well?

- Not enough doctors and health facilities, especially in rural areas
- Dental services: expensive, poor service
- Poor health services
- Hospital and medical centre waiting times
- Not enough hospitals
- Sexually transmissible infections among young people
- Some doctors have poor English - hard to understand
- Cost of private health care
- Cost of health care in general, not enough bulk billing
- Cost of medications
- Young people aged 16+ need to use adult hospitals, scary
- Aboriginal health.

What are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on?

- Easier access to health care, reduce wait times
- More health services/facilities/medical centres
- Cheaper health care, more bulk billing
- More health funding
- Better quality health care
- More beds in hospitals
- More hospitals for children
- More after hours doctors
- Compulsory vaccinations for terminal and infectious diseases.

Access to sports and social activities

What's working well?

- Variety of sports available, both in and out of school
- Good local sports clubs
- Sporting events for young people, especially when free
- PCYC organised sport - league, gymnastics, boxing
- Good sporting programs
- Weekend sport
- Opportunities for outside school extracurricular activities
- Like social aspect to sport
- Sports keep young people out of trouble, promote positive lifestyle
- Contact sports good for aggression.

Participants

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the 4,258 children and young people we consulted with.

Table 1. Sample characteristics	Number	Per cent
TOTAL	4,258	100.0
Gender		
Male	1,518	35.6
Female	2,132	50.1
Missing	608	14.3
Age group		
0-10 years	413	9.7
11-17 years	3,118	73.2
18-24 years	718	16.9
Missing	9	0.2
Aboriginal status*		
Non-Aboriginal	3,864	90.8
Aboriginal	394	9.2
Language background other than English		
Yes	334	10.1**
No		
Geographic location		
Sydney	2,536	59.6
Rest of NSW	1,258	29.5
Missing	464	10.9

Notes: *The recorded number of Aboriginal children and young people is most likely an underestimate of the actual number consulted with. This is because this information was not collected in face-to-face consultations. In any case, Aboriginal children and young people were over-sampled compared to the 4.3% of Aboriginal children and young people aged 0-24 years in the NSW population (ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011).

** The percentage of LBOTE children and young people was calculated with the 959 polling respondents removed, as information about other languages spoken at home was not collected. In addition, the recorded number of children and young people with a language background other than English is most likely an underestimate of the actual number consulted with. This is because this information was not collected in face-to-face consultations.

Table 2 shows the numbers of children and young people that participated in each of the different consultation methods.

Table 2. Number (and %) of children and young people that participated in each consultation type	Number	Per cent
TOTAL	4,258	100.0
Advocate staff facilitated group consultation	1507	35.4
Classroom consultation	160	3.8
Peer to peer consultation	276	6.5
Online survey	351	8.2
Postcard	1,005	23.6
Polling	959	22.5



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