

54 reasons

MAKING RIGHTS REAL

54 REASONS' 2026-2027 STRATEGY



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose lands we live and work, honouring their continued connection to land, sea, skies and water. We pay respects to Elders and Ancestors of Country and celebrate their role in passing down sacred cultural, spiritual and educational practices. We also acknowledge the strength and commitment of First Nations practitioners that work alongside children and young people to support and guide leaders of the future.

When we talk about children and young people throughout this document, we mean everyone aged 18 and under.



MAKING RIGHTS REAL IN AUSTRALIA

This document is both a progress report and a renewed promise. It sets out who 54 reasons is, what we've built since launching our first 'Making Rights Real' strategy in 2023, and where we're directing our energy from 2026–27. It's a chance to reflect on what's working, and set a clear and ambitious roadmap for what comes next.



Australia should be the best place in the world for children to grow up. And it can be.

But that future won't arrive on its own. It takes deliberate choices, sustained effort and a commitment to listen to children and young people. Most importantly, we need to act on what they tell us.

In 2023, we made one of those choices. Save the Children Australia launched 54 reasons as a new chapter in our local story – centred on making rights real for children and young people in Australia and shaped by what they told us they wanted: something more accessible, resonant and optimistic. Since then, teams across the country have taken that energy and turned it into action – in playgroups and schools, in refuges, in detention centres, in communities recovering from disaster, and in advocacy that challenges systems that are failing too many children.

Three years on, we're sharpening our focus and lifting our ambitions, guided by what we've learned so far.

Over the next two years, you'll see us doubling down on early intervention in the early years, with more targeted approaches that strengthen children's development and support families to

stay happy, healthy and together.

You'll see us standing with children with experiences of domestic and family violence, championing their rights to be truly understood as victim-survivors, and pushing for systems that respond to their unique needs. You'll see us fight for rights-respecting youth justice systems – because children and young people's outcomes are brighter and communities are safer when we invest in prevention, belonging and opportunity.

Our approach to this work will be collaborative and intentional.

We'll continue to build agency, accountability and accessibility into our services and across our whole organisation. We'll listen, follow through and report back. We'll draw on evidence and lived experience to improve what we do, and we'll be honest about what we're learning along the way.

Most importantly, this strategy embeds children and young people as our partners in changemaking, recognising that they are the experts in their own lives and our best guides for action.

This is our promise to them: to listen deeply. To act with courage. To keep working until their rights are real.



WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US ²⁰²³⁻²⁵



This strategy has been shaped by listening to children and young people, through our services, consultations and feedback, ongoing engagement, and through our Young Advisors, who provide us with their expertise and advice on a regular basis. Here's just a small selection of what children have told us over the last three years.

"When my family help me do things I want to do, like sports. It makes me know they love me."

- Participant, 12yrs, NSW



"Life changes a lot from day to day so it is good that my worker can help me and not make me feel bad if I have not done things or I get in trouble."

- Participant



"Maybe they just need to know that I am here, I am a person and I have feelings as well. Just because I can be difficult, it doesn't mean that I don't deserve care or help... Maybe that's what they can do, actually help out when they say they will and make us feel like someone cares about us instead of just feeling like another number."

- Participant, 16yrs, TAS



"Children's rights are important in Australia, because it protects children who usually don't have a voice and are too small and innocent to protect themselves against threats they might not be aware of."

- Young Advisor



"Initially I felt lost until 54 reasons started working with me. Through them I have found a voice and that I know I am being heard. I have felt connected and belonged like never before"

- Participant, 17yrs, QLD





“I have hope that children’s rights will advance in the future because less people are staying silent, people are learning what is and isn’t right and learning their rights earlier on.”

– Young Advisor



“Young people should know they have the right to be heard and influence decisions that affect their lives. Their voices matter and can drive change.”

– Young Advisor



“Families going out on country [and] having talks keeps me going, especially when we go out of community with youth staff talking makes me feel like I belong to the community.”

– Participant, 16yrs, QLD



“Looking ahead, I’m excited about studying law at uni and becoming a lawyer. The confidence and determination I got from Homework Club will definitely help me reach my goals.”

– Participant, VIC



“We need a safe place we can go and hang out, somewhere where adults can be but where we have space for privacy.”

– Participant, 15yrs, NSW



STRATEGY ON A PAGE



IMPACT GOAL

We will work in the places where children's rights aren't met in deep or consistent ways.



STRATEGIC PILLARS



Supporting child development through shared adversity

Strengthening children's development and learning when economic stress, disaster, discrimination or unfair systems put their rights at risk.

Supporting children experiencing domestic and family violence as victim-survivors in their own right

Ensuring children are seen, heard and supported as victim-survivors, and that systems respond to their safety, recovery and long-term wellbeing.

Demonstrating and advocating for a rights-respecting approach to youth justice

Advancing youth justice approaches that uphold children's rights and deliver safer, better outcomes for children and communities.

ENABLERS



Agency, accountability and accessibility

Embedding children's rights, participation and accountability into our services and the way we work — so children, caregivers and our people can shape decisions and see follow-through.

Leading a national conversation on child rights

Building understanding, momentum and collective action so children's rights and participation are embedded across policy, practice and public debate.

FOUNDATIONS



Our people

Investing in a skilled, supported and values-led team, so they can lead with care, courage, cultural safety and integrity.

Data and evidence

Using insight to strengthen our impact and accountability to children, community and partners.

Locally led, globally connected

Our work is grounded in local needs and knowledge, and guided by a century of global experience.

Investing for sustainable growth

So we can respond to emerging needs and remain a strong, trusted advocate for children over time.

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PILLAR ONE:

Supporting child development through shared adversity

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

- **Play2Learn** – our nationwide playgroup and family support program – is supporting children to meet key developmental milestones and start school ready to thrive – and families tell us they're more confident to support their child's learning. We've made improvements to the service and seen developmental outcomes quadruple and caregiver confidence triple – showing the strength of the new model as it scales nationally in 2026.
- **Hands on Learning** is embedded in more than 140 primary and secondary schools nationally, supporting students to build social and emotional skills, confidence and capacity through creative and practical projects. Students report big gains in confidence, teamwork, communication and their willingness to try new things. Parents describe the program as life-changing, with nearly 90% seeing improvements in their child's wellbeing, resilience and behaviour.
- Our in-school wellbeing program, **Journey of Hope**, has supported more than 5,000 children to recover and reset in the wake of disasters like bushfire and floods. Independent evaluation showed improved connection, stronger coping skills and reduced emotional challenges for participating students.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

- Children, young people and caregivers tell us they need more support with daily essentials and the cost of living. Our Young Advisors have challenged us to elevate poverty reduction as a priority.
- As disasters become more frequent, widespread and severe, focusing on individual events is no longer enough. We need to strengthen how children and young people's needs and voices are recognised in the systems that respond to emergencies – so that responses protect children, support recovery, and help communities build resilience.



FROM 2026–2027, WE WILL:

- scale our proven early years and in-school models to reach more children who need them most
- lift the voices and views of children and young people in disaster preparedness, response and recovery
- amplify children's experiences of poverty through shared advocacy with children, young people and partners
- strengthen how children's needs and voices are recognised in our programs, and in broader settlement systems and support.

IF WE GET THIS RIGHT:

- children under five and their families with experiences of marginalisation, exclusion or vulnerability will be supported early and at scale
- school-aged children and families with the greatest support needs will be supported to develop well and thrive together
- children and young people in disaster-affected regions will have their voices and views heard and acted on
- migrant and refugee children and young people will feel heard and seen as individuals in their own right, experience better outcomes, and policy will better respond to their unique needs.

PILLAR TWO:

Supporting children experiencing domestic and family violence as victim-survivors in their own right

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

- We're embedding child-centred responses to domestic and family violence in early intervention programs.
- Children and young people are shaping how we work, and we're pairing their insights with evidence-based practice – including the Safe and Together model – to strengthen how we recognise harm, support protective parents, and keep families safe.
- More children and families are moving from crisis toward stability. A survey of caregivers showed that 90% of carers in our refuge service reporting increased safety, confidence and connection.
- With support from partners like IKEA, we're supporting more women and children to transition into stable housing and accommodation.
- Our refuge eligibility guidelines mean that more families can stay together.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

- Children aren't getting what they need early enough – especially in the “first moment” of crisis.
- Only 28% of children aged 0–5 entering our refuge and outreach services are meeting all developmental milestones. Many are arriving with significant delays, demonstrating a clear need for consistent, child-focused support.
- Children are telling us how important it is that we support caregivers. They want their parents and caregivers to be supported and empowered to be their best and strongest advocates.

FROM 2026–2027, WE WILL:

- listen to children and young people about what services and support would make a difference in their experience, and act on this with our teams, partners and governments
- keep delivering child-centred prevention, early intervention and crisis response
- expand tools, research and advocacy that elevate children's experiences and strengthen sector capacity
- advocate with partners for increased focus on children and young people in the 2027 Action Plan – part of the 2022–2032 National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children
- embed domestic and family violence tools and training into all services, because early intervention can change trajectories for the better.

IF WE GET THIS RIGHT:

- more children will meet age-appropriate milestones and feel emotionally and physically safe
- young people using violence will receive earlier, more effective support
- women will have stronger pathways to safety, stability and healing
- governments will invest more in support and recovery for children with experiences of violence.

PILLAR THREE:

Demonstrating and advocating for a rights-respecting approach to youth justice

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

- Young people tell us they feel listened to, respected and supported in our youth justice services.
- Our rights-respecting approach is reducing reoffending, strengthening family connections, and supporting school re-engagement.
- New evidence, programs and partnerships are helping us challenge harmful policy backsliding and show what better can look like.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

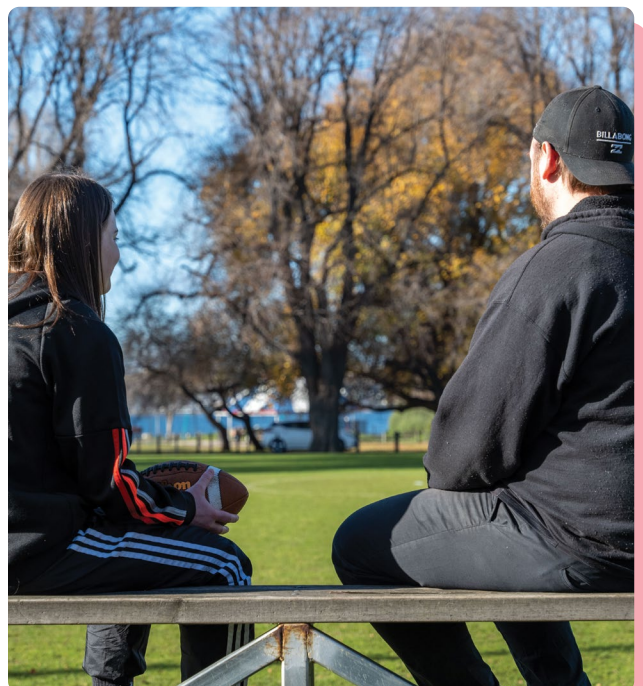
- Young people want consistency, cultural connection and adults who show up.
- Young people engage more deeply in programs co-designed with them, in spaces shaped around their needs.
- Education is a powerful protective factor. Helping young people to stay engaged in learning, through early intervention and sustained support, is where we can make the biggest difference.

FROM 2026–2027, WE WILL:

- centre and elevate the voices and experiences of children and young people in everything we do, including how we hold governments to account for supporting every child and young person's rights to thrive
- grow prevention, diversion and early intervention programs, with a strong focus on education and family support
- be a fearless champion — alongside our partners and communities — for national and state/territory system reform, grounded in children's rights
- fiercely advocate for rights-respecting alternatives to detention and criminalisation, to make children and communities safer.

IF WE GET THIS RIGHT:

- robust early intervention and diversion supports for young people, families and communities mean fewer young people will enter justice systems
- more young people will stay connected to school, culture and family — and fewer will reoffend
- protective factors will become stronger and more consistent
- more children and young people in youth justice systems will have their rights upheld and respected
- the Commonwealth will take greater national leadership on youth justice, including developing enforceable national standards.



ENABLER ONE:

Agency, accountability and accessibility for children, young people and carers and for our people

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

- Children's rights are shaping more of how we work, from the way long-term strategic decisions are made, to how services are delivered on the ground.
- Our people feel increasingly confident drawing on child rights and participation principles, supported by better data, training and tools.
- Our commitment and investment in cultural capability building, reconciliation efforts, and support for our remote workforce.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

- Children and young people trust us – but some don't understand how our support helps them.
- Frontline staff need stronger feedback loops, simpler systems and more predictable funding.
- We've had mixed experiences transitioning supports to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and need to do better at planning, communication and governance.
- We need to do more to manage the risk of overburden and cultural load on our First Nations team members, and on the First Nations people and communities with whom we work.

FROM 2025–2027, WE WILL:

- embed effective rights-based practice and data-led insights into everything we do
- mature our relationships with First Nations communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, with dedicated support for self-determination
- improve cultural responsiveness for the children, young people and carers we work with
- explore technology that lightens the load for frontline teams and improves experience for children, young people and families in our programs
- invest in leadership capability to keep developing skills, mindsets and behaviours needed to create impact for children.

IF WE GET THIS RIGHT:

- more children and young people will feel understood, respected and able to shape their own support
- even more practitioners will feel confident and equipped in data-led work and child rights principles
- our workforce will increasingly reflect the communities we serve
- every person in 54 reasons will feel safe, valued and well-equipped to champion children's rights
- we will build strong, respectful relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and with governments, that enable sustainable and positive community ownership of supports.



ENABLER TWO:

Leading a national conversation on child rights and inspiring support for children's participation

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

- Child rights are more visible in national conversation, from policy to practice, than they were three years ago.
- Through partnerships, research and public advocacy, we're shifting narratives, building momentum and mobilising the child-rights ecosystem.
- Children and young people are increasingly influencing decisions across 54 reasons.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

- A child-rights approach leads to stronger outcomes across systems – we're seeing this in the impact of our services.
- To shift policy and practice, children must be central – in every room, at every stage.
- Children want adults and systems that follow through, communicate clearly and see them for who they are, not their circumstances.



FROM 2025–2027, WE WILL:

- champion the case for child rights, drawing on evidence and lived experience
- drive reform and build capacity across systems through the Australian Centre for Child Rights
- open more and better pathways for children and young people to influence decisions – including younger children
- demand accountability to children and young people from ourselves and others – and make youth voices impossible to ignore.

IF WE GET THIS RIGHT:

- more children in Australia will have their rights met, as child rights approaches are strengthened and deepened across government, community organisations and key institutions
- child rights and participation will be built into everyday decisions, policies and practice
- children and young people's voices will be more visible and influential in public debate and decision-making
- the children and young people we work with will feel heard – and see their views lead to real action.

STRATEGY FOUNDATIONS

OUR PEOPLE

Our impact for children starts with our people. At 54 reasons, we invest in a skilled, supported and values-led workforce that reflects the communities we work alongside. We strengthen leadership at all levels, build capability for evidence-informed, culturally-safe and rights-based practice, and create a culture where people feel safe, respected and accountable. When our people are supported to lead with care, courage and integrity, children and young people experience better outcomes.

DATA AND EVIDENCE

We use data and evidence to stay accountable to children and young people, partners and funders. This means understanding what works, measuring what changes for children, and using insight to adapt and improve. By strengthening our data capability, we can make better decisions, demonstrate impact, and challenge systems that aren't delivering. Evidence helps us move beyond good intentions – ensuring our services, advocacy and investments are guided by what genuinely improves children's lives.

LOCALLY-LED AND GLOBALLY-CONNECTED

We know outcomes for children are strongest when decisions are led locally and informed by lived experience. At the same time, we draw strength and expertise from being part of a global movement for children's rights. We are actively working locally to shift power, deepen partnerships with communities and support First Nations self-determination – while staying connected to global learning, influence and collective action.

INVESTING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Making rights real for children requires long-term sustainability. We invest carefully in our people, systems and partnerships so we can deliver impact today and into the future. This includes diversifying income, strengthening financial resilience, and supporting innovation that improves outcomes at scale. By investing for sustainable growth, we protect our ability to respond to emerging needs and remain a strong, trusted advocate for children over time.







Save the Children

54 reasons

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