

54 reasons

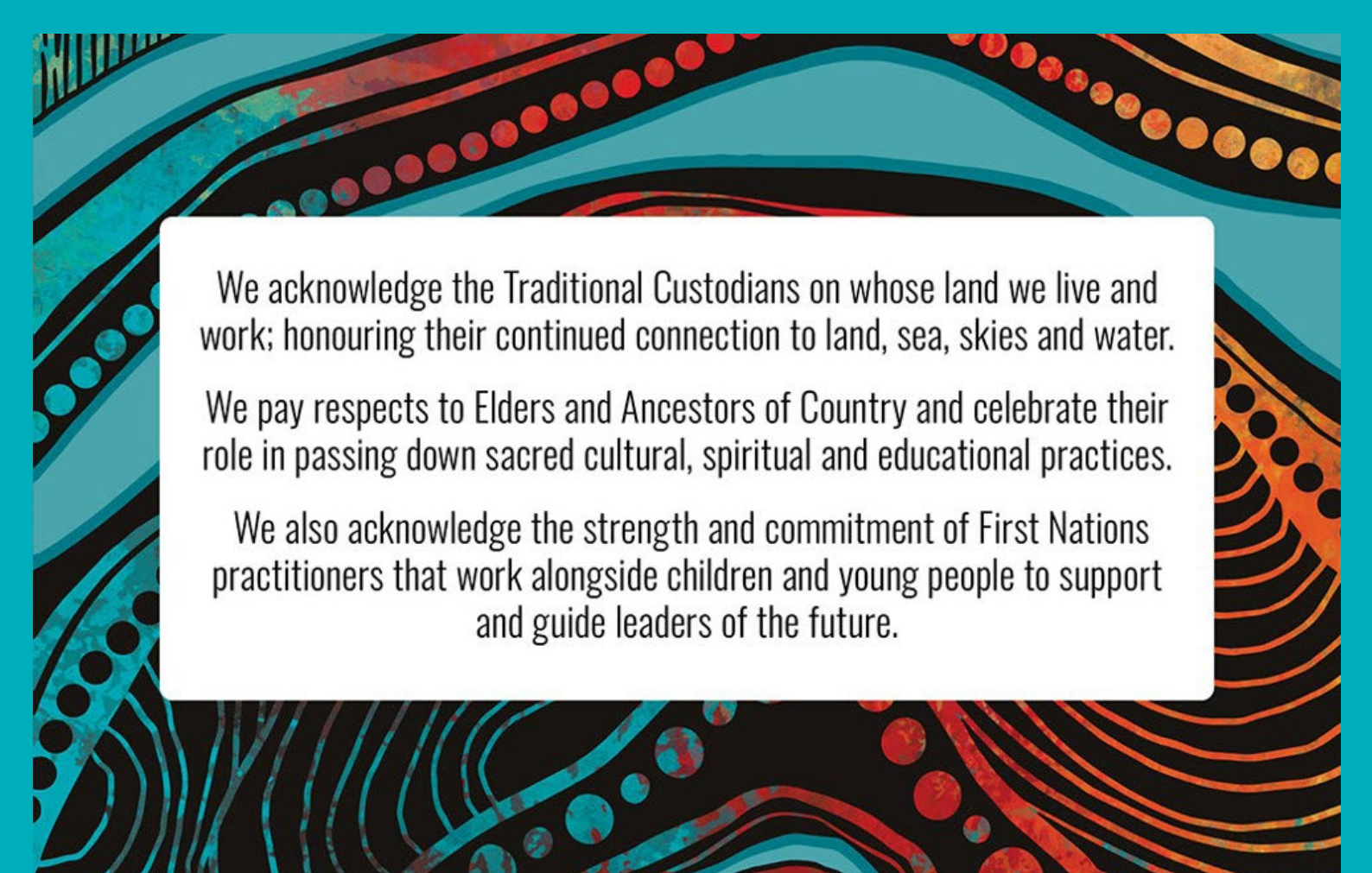
IN OUR BEST INTERESTS:

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON
WHAT MATTERS MOST

What care and safety
looks like to children
and young people, and
what adults need to
know to act in their best
interests.

OCTOBER 2026





We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose land 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.

First and most importantly, we thank the children and young people who participated in this consultation. Thank you for helping us learn what matters to you, and how we can do better for and alongside you. We will take everything you've shared seriously.

We thank the many practitioners and workers across 54 reasons who supported children and young people to have a say about their care and protection in ways that are meaningful to them.

We also recognise the leadership of Erin Hoffman, Practice Development Manager – Child Rights and Participation; Ginny Vincent, Evidence and Evaluation Project Officer; and Kylie Williams, Head of Practice and Impact Measurement, in this process.

For more information, please email info@54reasons.org.au, or go to www.54reasons.org.au/contact.

**“TO BE SAFE
AND CARED FOR,
FOR ME FEELS
LIKE I AM BEING
LISTENED TO. EVEN
THOUGH ADULTS DO
DIFFERENT THINGS
FOR ME IN MY LIFE
ALL OF THEM CAN DO
THINGS THAT MAKE
ME FEEL SEEN.”**

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NT

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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When children speak, it's our responsibility not only to listen, but to act.

The core ideas and principles of children's rights, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), are powerful, inspiring and deeply practical. Taken as a whole, a child rights-based approach gives us a comprehensive roadmap to ensure all children, young people and their families and communities flourish.

- All children should be able to access their rights without discrimination
- Children have the right to develop to their fullest potential
- Children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them
- Children's best interests should be central in all decisions that affect them

In this report, we share insights and guidance from 356 children and young people – participants in our services across Australia – on two core parts of children's right to have adults act in their best interests: being protected and being properly cared for.

What children and young people shared is full of wisdom and insight, and highly relevant for all adults who influence children's lives and outcomes. Children tell us that care starts with trusting, stable relationships. They describe how welcomed physical proximity and quality time with adults help them feel cared for and safe. They recognise that adults sometimes need to do things for them, but that doing things with them honours their agency and strengthens connection. And they are clear: they want the adults in their lives to listen, engage meaningfully and advocate for them.

Children's recommendations and ideas are, in nearly all cases, very simple and practical – small, and not-so-small things that can make a very big difference in their day-to-day lives and long-term safety, wellbeing and development.

We hope this report changes how you show up for the children and young people in your life – guided by what children have told us it takes to uphold their best interests. Everyone with power or influence in children's lives has a responsibility to act on this guidance. To help you put it into practice, we highlight what matters most for:

- parents and caregivers,
- services, service providers and practitioners, and
- system leaders, influencers and decision-makers.

Children have trusted us with these insights. They've told us about their experiences, and what they need from us. They've done this so that adults will better understand and build on what matters to children.

They rightly expect us to take their views seriously, and to act.

Now it's over to us.

Vicki Mau

Executive Director, 54 reasons

ABOUT 54 REASONS

With their voices and views at the centre of our work, 54 reasons exists to make rights real for children and young people across Australia. We're proudly part of the Save the Children Australia group, and our name represents our shared foundations: the 54 articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We champion all of these rights in our work, with a clear focus on three strategic priorities:

- supporting children & young people's social & emotional development in regions affected by shared adversity or disaster;
- ensuring children experiencing domestic and family violence are visible and supported as clients in their own right;
- and advocating and demonstrating the value of a rights-respecting youth justice system.

Each year, we support more than 20,000 children and families through 35+ outcome-driven services across Australia. And because the system doesn't always create the conditions for children and young people to thrive, we're working to lift a national conversation on child rights to drive change.

Together with children, young people and our partners, we're making rights real for children and young people in Australia through services that empower, systems that listen and communities that act.



Photo: Ashton & Peek / Save the Children Australia

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Why ask children about their best interests?

54 reasons is a child rights organisation, working to make rights real for every child in Australia. Children's right to have adults act in their best interests underpins our work.

Children and young people are experts in their own lives. When we listen to and learn from them, our decisions are better informed and more effective.

Care and protection are fundamental to children's outcomes. Understanding what matters to children about care and safety strengthens the services we provide to them.

This focus on children's best interests was chosen, in part, because it provides a developmentally appropriate way into wider conversations with children – including very young children – about what matters to them when it comes to adults upholding their rights more broadly. In other words, children's perspectives on their best interests can illuminate their views on their rights as a whole.

Children's right to have their best interests treated as a primary consideration must be understood in the context of children's other rights and an underpinning child rights-based framework. Children's rights are all interrelated and mutually supportive; for example, children's right for their best interests to be placed front and centre can only be met when their right to be heard and taken seriously is also upheld.

The power of a child rights-based approach lies in its comprehensive nature, and how it is brought to life through children's day-to-day experiences and the actions of adults in supporting and enabling these rights.

When we listen to and take children's views seriously, we remind them they are seen, heard and valued.

"Article 12 of the Convention provides for the right of children to express their views in every decision that affects them. Any decision that does not take into account the child's views or does not give their views due weight according to their age and maturity, does not respect the possibility for the child or children to influence the determination of their best interests."

Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRC/C/GC/14. 29 May 2013. General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration. Par 53.

WHAT DOES ARTICLE 3 SAY?

Actions and decisions that impact children should always be in their best interests.

Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) outlines children's right to have adults act in their best interests. It's a critical article in the Convention, and a topical one for our current child rights environment in Australia.

Article 3 comprises three main points (paraphrased):

- In all actions concerning children, their best interests should be a primary consideration. This includes relevant systems and services.
- The State (Australia) should make sure each child has the protection and care necessary for their wellbeing, taking into account the rights and duties of parents and caregivers.
- Services responsible for children's care and protection should be held accountable to established standards, especially relating to children's safety, health and competent supervision.

NB. "The terms 'protection and care' must also be read in a broad sense ... in relation to the comprehensive ideal of ensuring the child's "well-being" and development. Children's well-being, in a broad sense includes their basic material, physical, educational, and emotional needs, as well as needs for affection and safety."

(From the General Comment relating to bests interests of the child, CRC/C/GC/14)

Photo: Michael Chilton / Save the Children Australia



WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

1. It's all about relationships

Children and young people's relationship with decision-makers directly impacts their care and safety, and how adults act in their best interests.

2. It's more than talk

Children and young people told us that safe, welcomed physical contact and closeness are among the clearest ways they experience care and safety. For young children in particular, it's how they know trusted adults care for them, and when they feel safest.

3. Making space matters

Making space for quality time is acting in children's best interests. 'Quality time' between adults, children and young people builds the open, trusting relationships and honest communication that are essential to children's wellbeing. Quality time is how many children and young people know they are safe and cared for.

4. Doing *for* matters, doing *with* honours agency and connection

Doing things *for* a child can offer predictability and care. Doing things *with* a child builds their agency and trust. Both are important. Doing *for* is often shaped by adult decisions and efficiency, while doing *with* makes room for the child's voice and perspective.

5. We're stronger together

When adults listen to children and young people, we make better decisions together. Children and young people care about how we listen to them and how we advocate for their best interests. Article 12 (the right to be heard and taken seriously) reinforces how important it is for decision-makers to listen to children and young people in ways that support their participation in their own care and safety.

"The expression 'primary consideration' means that the child's best interests may not be considered on the same level as all other considerations. This strong position is justified by the special situation of the child: dependency, maturity, legal status and, often, voicelessness. Children have less possibility than adults to make a strong case for their own interests and those involved in decisions affecting them must be explicitly aware of their interests. If the interests of children are not highlighted, they tend to be overlooked."

Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRC/C/GC/14. 29 May 2013. General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration. Par 37.

CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

What we did

Across 2025, 54 reasons consulted with children and young people across our services to learn what adults acting in their best interests looks like to them. Our Practice and Impact Measurement team, frontline teams and Young Advisors co-designed a set of questions that facilitators could draw from to meet the developmental and psychosocial safety needs of individual children and young people. This question set focused on themes of 'protection and care' in Article 3 of the CRC and the responsible adults in children's lives.

Our approach

All our work at 54 reasons is grounded in a child rights-based approach. Our whole-of-organisation practice framework, [child i view](#), guides our practice across services and programs. Our embedded [Child Participation Framework](#) includes Save the Children's global best practice principles – the [Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation](#), and 54 reasons' five Child Participation Practice Standards – reflecting child participatory best practice in a local context.

Applying our Child Participation Standards and principles in our work alongside children and young people is how we practise with intention - hearing what matters to them, learning from this and demonstrate we are taking them seriously.

We apply these child rights-based frameworks and practices consistently across all our work with children and young people. This includes our day-to-day services, consultations like this one, our ongoing 'child voice reporting' and other accountability mechanisms built into our governance and decision-making. Working this way upholds children's rights and leads to better outcomes for children and young people.



Photo: Dave Walters / Save the Children

Upholding our Child Participation Standards

1. **We met children where they were at** by running the consultation at times, and in places, spaces and relationships already familiar to participants.
2. **We listened deeply** by asking considered, developmentally appropriate questions that resonate with children and young people, selected and adapted according to children and young people's individual circumstances. We made space to listen.
3. **We took children's views seriously** by analysing and reporting on what children told us and sharing our learnings with everyone at 54 reasons. We ensured recommendations were duly considered at the most senior levels of our organisation by including data and key recommendations in regular Child Voice Reports. We produced child- and youth-friendly versions of this report to be transparent and accountable, and to close the feedback loop.
4. **We invested in children** by teaching them about their right to have adults act in their best interests before the consultation, using an active consent process, and offering developmentally appropriate ways to take part.
5. **We are championing a better world for children** through applying what we learn internally, and advocating for participants' views to be heard and taken seriously externally. We protect participants' identities when we share their views.



WHAT WE ASKED

Facilitators were asked to select one consultation question for each child or young person, and could adapt agreed elements where this was helpful to communicate the intention of that question. While question choices were grouped in developmental stages, facilitators could draw from any questions to match participants' developmental stage, capabilities, and psychosocial safety needs. This included both primary and alternative (or follow-up) questions that facilitators could select from to meet children where they were at.

Questions recommended for children in their early years

Primary question:

- What is something a grown-up (or adult) does that shows they care about you?

Alternative or follow-up questions:

- How do grown-ups look after you?
- What is something a grown-up does that makes you feel safe?

Questions recommended for children in their middle years

Primary question:

- How do adults make you feel safe? How do adults look after you?

Alternative or follow-up questions:

- When you grow up what is one thing you could do to make children feel safe?
- When you grow up what is one thing you will do to make sure children are looked after?

Questions recommended for young people

Primary question:

- Do you feel like adults take your care and safety seriously? Why / why not?

Alternative or follow-up questions:

- What things should adults do to make you feel safe and cared for?
- What things do adults do that make you feel unsafe or uncared for?
- Share a moment when an adult made you feel safe or cared for
- Share a moment when an adult should have made you feel safe or cared for



When practitioners facilitated a group where diverse developmental stages were present, the safest relevant question for the group was asked.

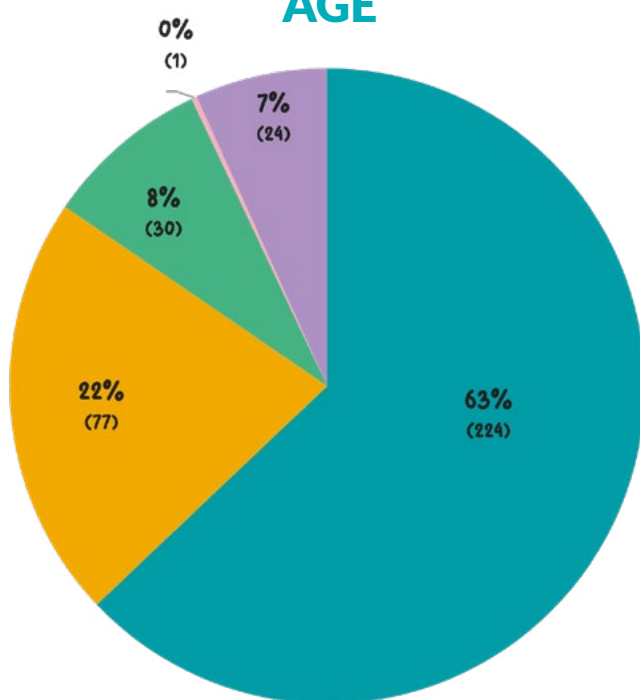
WHO WE HEARD FROM

356

Contributors

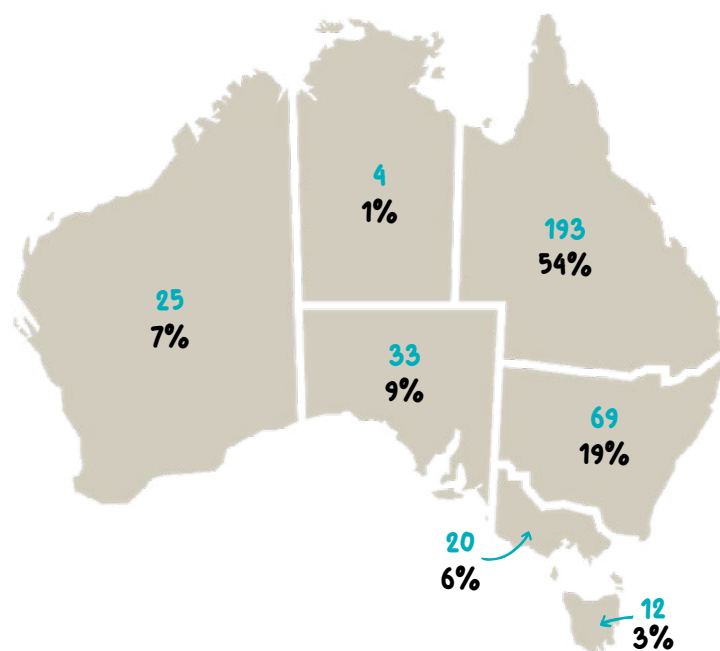
through 375 contributions.
Some children and young people answered more than one question.

AGE

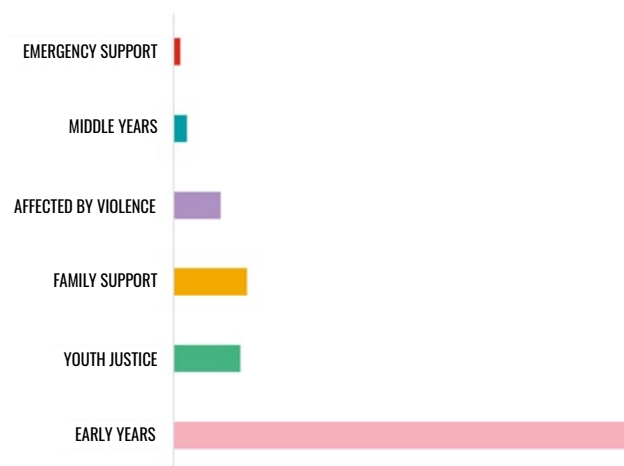


■ 0-5 YEARS
■ 5-12 YEARS
■ 13-17 YEARS
■ 18-25 YEARS
■ NOT STATED

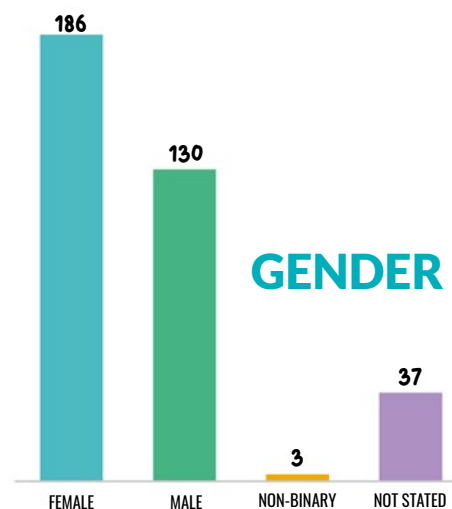
LOCATION



SERVICE TYPE



GENDER



KEY INSIGHTS

Summary of key themes

The following themes are captured against the two core consultation topics of care and safety. Children's best interests is about their holistic wellbeing, reinforcing that care and safety are intertwined.

INSIGHT	KEY THEMES
1. All about relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care and safety are relational, not just procedural.• Safety begins in relationship. Children distinguish between being protected and being partnered with in their safety.• Young people want adults to notice and respond to non-verbal cues.• Routine actions (meals, hugs, boundaries) contribute to children's wellbeing and also signal that children are a priority.• When adults advocate for children, it strongly affects how safe children feel – especially in adult-centric systems.
2. More than talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcomed physical contact and proximity is a primary language that communicates care and safety to children.• Children in their early years often described hugs, cuddles and being held as central to their sense of protection.• For children with additional needs, connection often begins with closeness.• Young people recall moments of physical comfort and proximity as transformative, especially in distress.• Feeling safe is compromised when touch is absent, forced or mis-attuned.• Having boundaries respected and having a say in proximity matters.
3. Making space matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and young people's examples of trust and safety largely focused on positive experiences with trusted adults.• Experiences of quality time are largely simple and not resource-intensive.• Presence is most powerful when focus is undivided.• Experiences of quality time communicate to children that they matter• Experiences of quality time are foundational to the trusting relationships that enable adults to act in children and young people's best interests.

INSIGHT	KEY THEMES
4. Doing for vs doing with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Doing <i>with</i>’ builds agency, trust and emotional safety. • Children feel most cared for when adults join them in everyday moments. • Young people value being consulted and included in decisions. • Physical proximity and shared activity deepen relational bonds. • ‘Doing <i>for</i>’ without explanation can feel dismissive. • Meals, play and solving problems together help build relationships. • Children rely on co-regulation through shared action (‘doing <i>with</i>’).
5. We’re stronger together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young children feel listened to and taken seriously when adults engage with them in play and in experiences they enjoy. • Young people connect being listened to with being understood. • Children and young people want adults to know what matters to them. • Young people don’t trust adults to know what’s in their best interests when those adults don’t engage with them in meaningful ways. • Young people want adults to care about and stand up for their best interests.

“MY DAD IS VERY HONEST AND TRUTHFUL WITH ME WHICH MAKES IT EASIER TO TALK TO HIM WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG, BECAUSE HE WILL TELL ME HONESTLY WHAT HE THINKS I SHOULD DO.”

11-12 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



INSIGHT 1: ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Care starts with someone who sees you.

Children and young people's relationship with decision-makers directly impacts their care and safety.

Children and young people across Australia are telling us plainly: safety begins in relationship. What matters is how adults show up: whether they listen, advocate for children and treat them as people who matter.

Routine protection works best when it comes with meaningful connection. The adults who children and young people remember as safe noticed when something was wrong – often before they said anything – and stood beside them. When children see adults speak up, especially at their most vulnerable moments, it makes a real difference to how safe they feel. Children are asking adults to put relationships at the centre of keeping them safe.



Children and young people told us about the quality of their relationship with the responsible adults in their lives through examples of connection and who they nominated as the trusted adult in their lives. The quality of their relationship determined whether they viewed that adult as a protective or risk factor in their best interests and whether they could trust adults to keep them safe and know they would 'look after' them.

Key themes from children and young people's contributions

- Care and safety are relational, not just procedural.
- Safety begins in relationship. Children distinguish between being protected and being partnered with in their safety.
- Young people want adults to notice and respond to non-verbal cues.
- Routine actions (meals, hugs, boundaries) contribute to children's wellbeing and also signal that children are a priority.
- When adults advocate for children, it strongly affects how safe children feel – especially in adult-centric systems.

What children and young people need from us



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Children remember how you made them feel. A squeeze cuddle, a bedtime story or standing up for them – moments like these build lasting trust.

Children need you to show up, listen and respond consistently. You are often the first person who keeps them safe. When you are warm and consistent, your child learns that they deserve love and protection, and that their voice counts. Small, everyday acts of care tell children that they matter and that they're safe.



SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Children and young people notice how adults respond to them. They told us they can tell when an adult is really listening, takes the time to explain things and speaks up for them when it matters.

For all of us who work with children, these everyday interactions help shape whether a child feels seen, heard and supported. Relational care is a core part of how we keep children safe.



Find opportunities to share these lessons with parents and caregivers.



SYSTEM LEADERS, INFLUENCERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

Children and young people live with the consequences of decisions that impact them, whether or not they were asked. They told us they notice when systems overlook them, and when systems are built around their needs.

System leaders and decision-makers are well placed to make relationships a core part of how systems keep children safe. When systems prioritise connection, communication and advocacy, children feel seen, valued and supported.



Reflect on these ideas individually and with your teams. Raise them with partners and sector networks.

“Emotional care is a basic need of children; if parents or other primary caregivers do not fulfil the child’s emotional needs, action must be taken so that the child develops a secure attachment. Children need to form an attachment to a caregiver at a very early age, and such attachment, if adequate, must be sustained over time in order to provide the child with a stable environment.”

Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRC/C/GC/14. 29 May 2013. General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration. Par 72.

Remember this...

For children and young people, relationships are central to care and safety. Children told us they feel safe when adults are warm and close by, they trust adults who listen, and they know they matter when adults keep showing up. Systems and services work best when they make room for relationships that help children recover, settle and feel empowered.

To help children thrive, we can ask two questions: what services does this child need, and who is there for them? Children and young people consistently told us that relationships make the difference.

Acting in children's best interests means making relationships a priority. Children's wellbeing depends on adults who pay attention and stay involved over time. Children experience systems through the adults in them, and they know a system is working when those adults see, hear and value them.

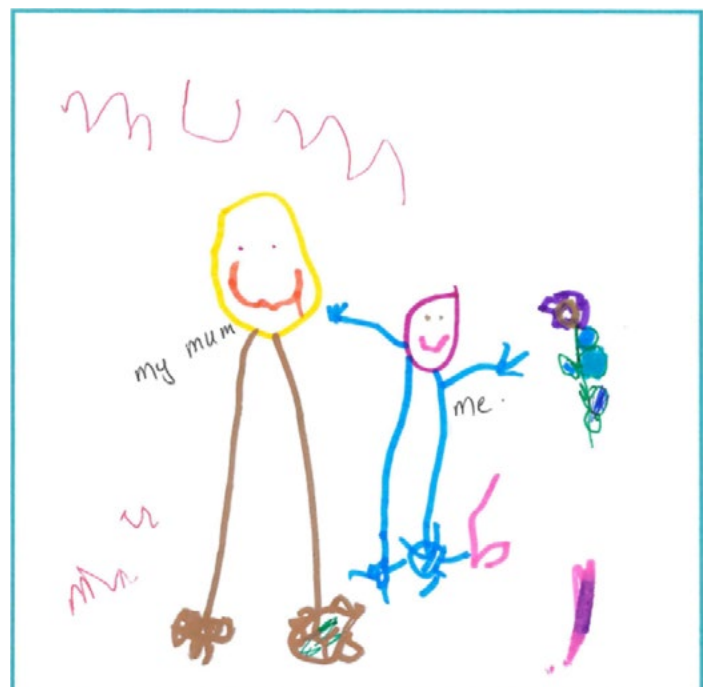


REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean for a child to feel truly seen by the people making decisions about their life?
2. When trusted relationships are missing, whose voice gets lost, and what are the consequences?
3. How might systems shift if every child were treated as someone whose story could change the rules?

**"MY MUM LOOKS AFTER ME.
SHE TAKES ME FOR A WALK
AND TAKES ME TO FUN PLACES
WHEN I FEEL SAD"**

– 4 YEAR-OLD BOY, NSW



Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS



"[GRANNY] PLAYS WITH ME AND BRINGS ME TO PLAYGROUP. SHE MAKES ME FEEL GOOD."

3 YEAR-OLD BOY, NSW

"DAD COOKS ME YUMMY DINNER AND WE PLAY MOUNTAIN DAD, I CLIMB UP HIM TO THE TOP OF HIS SHOULDERS!"

3 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NSW

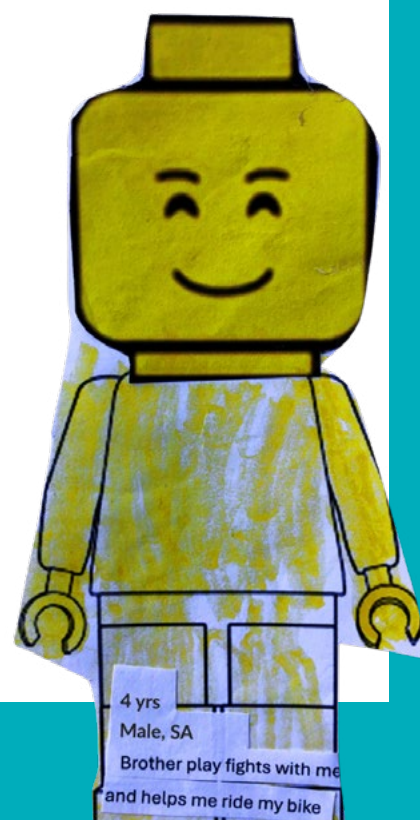


"THE DOCTOR GIVES ME MEDICINE AND MAKES ME FEEL SAFE AND NOT SCARED WHEN I AM SICK, THEN I FEEL BETTER."

4.5 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NSW



Because of the largely strengths-based questions we used, children and young people overwhelmingly told us about their strong relationships with parents and caregivers and extended family, but also support workers, teachers, medical professionals and police.



Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 6–12 YEARS



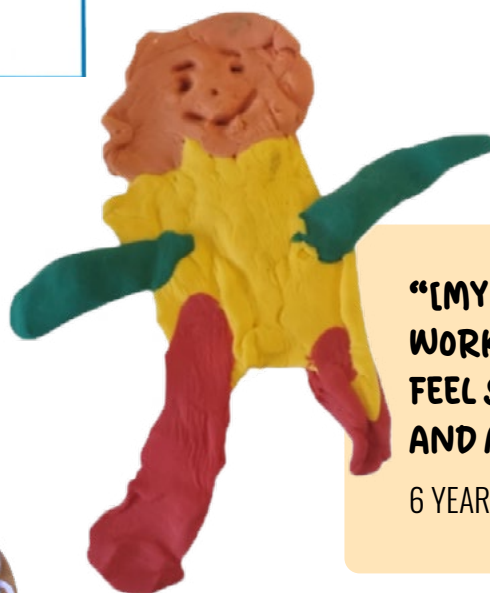
"MY MUM IS SAFE, MY DAD IS SAFE, I LOVE MY DAD AND WHEN MY FAMILY PLAY I AM SO HAPPY."

12 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



"I FELT CARED FOR BY LAST YEAR'S TEACHER. LAST YEAR'S TEACHER DIDN'T CRITICISE ME. HE KNEW THAT IT WAS TOUGH FOR ME. HE WAS PATIENT."

12 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD



"[MY SUPPORT WORKER MAKES ME FEEL SAFE, SHE] IS NICE AND ALWAYS HAPPY."

6 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



"MUM TAKES CARE OF US BY ALWAYS STAYING WITH US."

8 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



"WHEN I'M HURT THEY HELP ME, THEY SAY 'ARE YOU OKAY?'"

7 YEAR-OLD BOY, TAS

Children and young people on the record

YOUNG PEOPLE 13–18 YEARS

"EVEN WHEN WE ARE YOUNG, WE STILL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN WE FEEL UNCARED FOR AND UNSAFE AND FEELING AS THOUGH WE ARE NOT BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY MAKES THE SITUATION WORSE.

IT LEADS TO YOUNG PEOPLE NOT REACHING OUT IF THEY DO NEED HELP AND CAN RESULT IN EXTREMELY UNSAFE REPERCUSSIONS IF THAT CONTINUES."

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"MY TEACHER NOTICED MY BODY LANGUAGE AND ASKED IF I WAS OKAY... IT MEANT THE WORLD TO ME."

16 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"MY DAD IS MY HERO... HE ALWAYS TRIED HIS BEST TO KEEP ME SAFE AND SHOW ME HOW MUCH HE CARED."

16 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"[TO MAKE CHILDREN FEEL SAFE, ADULTS CAN] LET YOU LIVE AT HOME, PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE, CHOOSE YOU OVER THE BOYFRIEND."

16 YEAR-OLD BOY, TAS

"ADULTS SHOULD ATTEMPT TO REALLY SHOW THEIR LISTENING SKILLS WHEN TRYING TO MAKE A YOUNGER PERSON FEEL HEARD. SIT DOWN AND LISTEN TO EVERYTHING WE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT OUR ISSUES, AND ACTUALLY INCORPORATE IT INTO HOW YOU CHOOSE TO REACT TO A SITUATION THEY MIGHT BE."

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"ALL MOTHERS SHOULD HAVE TO CARE FOR HER CHILDREN. MAKE SURE YOU ARE OK."

12 YEAR-OLD GIRL, WA

INSIGHT 2: MORE THAN TALK

Care is felt as well as spoken.

Welcomed physical contact and proximity influences children and young people's feelings of care and safety – and raises special considerations for children in their early years and for children with additional needs.

Children and young people told us that they feel safety emotionally and physically. Welcomed physical contact – like cuddles, handholding and sitting close – is one of the clearest ways they experience care. Across ages and settings, they describe how these moments of closeness make them feel protected and emotionally secure.

For children in their early years, physical touch is often their first and most fluent language of connection. For some children with additional needs, it might also be a vital sensory anchor, helping them regulate emotion and navigate unfamiliar environments.

These gestures are central to how children build trust and understand safety. When adults offer physical contact that is respectful and chosen, it signals to a child that they're seen and understood. This insight asks adults to show care through their presence and actions, as well as with their words.

**"MUM GIVES ME
SQUEEZE CUDDLES TO
HELP ME FEEL SAFE. I
SIT CLOSE TO HER."**

– 4.5 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD

Key themes from children and young people's contributions

- Welcomed physical contact and proximity is a primary language that communicates care and safety to children.
- Children in their early years often described hugs, cuddles and being held as central to their sense of protection.
- For children with additional needs, connection often begins with closeness.
- Young people recall moments of physical comfort and proximity as transformative, especially in distress.
- Feeling safe is compromised when touch is absent, forced or mis-attuned.
- Having boundaries respected and having a say in proximity matters.

What children and young people need from us



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

For many children, having you close by is one of the clearest signs that they are safe. Welcomed touch – through cuddles, closeness and holding hands – helps them know they are protected and loved. Especially in the early years and for many children with additional needs, attuned physical care helps regulate emotion and build trust.



SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS

For many children, having you close by is one of the clearest signs that they are safe and cared for. Welcomed touch – like cuddles and holding hands – helps them know they are protected and loved, and was especially important to children in their early years. Young people also valued this – but especially valued you knowing when they need you near and when they need space.



SYSTEM LEADERS, INFLUENCERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

Systems shape whether children experience relational safety. Staff and services need clear guidance on when and how welcomed physical contact is appropriate, and when it is not. This guidance must be embedded in training, policy and standards, and valued in service delivery models. It must also sit alongside rigorous safeguarding cultures, systems and processes. This can be particularly relevant in children's early years and for children with additional needs. When systems prioritise meaningful connection, children know they are safe and valued.



**"YOU [OUR 54 REASONS WORKER]
LET US STAY SAFE HERE, YOU ALWAYS
COME OUT AND PLAY WITH US."**

6 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

Remember this...

Policy sets the standard. Presence is what children feel. They told us they feel safe when adults stay close in distressing or unfamiliar situations and stay calm when things get hard.

For young people navigating complex emotions, proximity signals that an adult is paying attention and will be there for them. For those with additional needs or trauma histories, proximity can help them regulate – supporting them to feel grounded, noticed and cared for without having to ask. When adults are physically present, without judgment or rushing, trust can grow.

Welcomed touch and proximity are central to how children feel cared for and understand that they are safe.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do we know when a child or young person welcomes physical care - and when silence or stillness speaks louder?
2. What might inclusive safety look like for children with sensory or neurodiverse needs?
3. Are we creating environments where every child's body feels respected, protected, and understood?



"MAMA CUDDLE."

3 YEAR-OLD BOY, NT

Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS

**"DAD CHUCKS
BURNOUTS. DAD DOES
MY HAIR. DAD COOKS
TEA AND IT'S YUMMY."**

UNDER 5, NSW



40%

of early years contributions identified hugs and cuddles as ways that adults keep children feeling safe and cared for.

**"MY DADDY GIVES ME
CUDDLES WHEN I WAKE UP."**

3 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD



**"MY NAN GIVES ME BIG HUGS AND SHE
LETS ME HELP HER WITH THE SHEEP IN
THE Paddock. THERE'S NO LAMBS YET.
WE ARE STILL WAITING."**

5 YEAR-OLD BOY, NSW



Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 6–12 YEARS

25%

of middle years contributions identified that physical play keeps children feeling safe and cared for.

How does your adult look after you and make you feel safe



Age: 6
Gender: Girl
State: QLD



"[MUM] GIVES ME AND MY BROTHER CUDDLES AND KISSES."

8 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"MUM KEEPS ME SAFE BY TELLING ME TO STAY NEAR HER"

6 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD

Children and young people on the record

YOUNG PEOPLE 13–18 YEARS

“WHEN MY MUM SAT ME DOWN AND REALLY LISTENED TO ME... SHE SLIGHTLY CHANGED THE WAY SHE REACTED AND REALLY SHOWED ME THAT I COULD CONFIDE IN HER, MAKING ME FEEL SAFE AND MORE THAN CARED FOR.”

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

30%

of contributions by young people identified that protective actions by trusted adult made them feel safe and cared for.

“INVADING YOUR PERSONAL SPACE OR TRYING TO PUSH THROUGH YOUR EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES LEAVE SOMEONE FEELING UNSAFE AND ALONE. ESPECIALLY IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO TO MAKE THE SITUATION STOP/THERE'S NO EASY ESCAPE FROM THE CONVERSATION OR INTERACTION.”

16 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

“EVERY TIME MY MUM KICKS ME OUT.”

15 YEAR-OLD BOY, TAS [IN RESPONSE TO 'SHARE A MOMENT WHEN AN ADULT SHOULD HAVE MADE YOU FEEL SAFE OR CARED FOR.']



Proximity matters to young people because it's how they know they're not alone in the moment. It's the difference between being observed and being accompanied, between someone watching from a distance and someone sitting beside them, noticing the shift in their body language before a word is spoken. It's how young people measure who's truly with them. And when someone is with them, care is evident, and safety becomes possible.

INSIGHT 3: MAKING SPACE

Presence is protection.

Quality time together enables adults to understand children's care and safety needs, and children to work out if they can trust adults to act in their best interests.

For children and young people, quality time with trusted adults is a clear signal of safety and care. It shows them they are a priority and that their wellbeing matters.

Key themes from children and young people's contributions

- Children and young people's examples of trust and safety largely focused on positive experiences with trusted adults.
- Experiences of quality time are largely simple and not resource-intensive.
- Presence is most powerful when it's undivided.
- Experiences of quality time communicate to children that they matter.
- Experiences of quality time are foundational to the trusting relationships that enable adults to act in children and young people's best interests.

What children and young people need from us



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Making space starts with everyday moments. When you read with your child or sit beside them, it shows them they matter. Children notice when you make time for them. These moments build trust and help children feel safe. Your presence is protective.



SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Whether you're a teacher, doctor, youth worker or case manager, the time you spend with children builds relationships. Taking a moment to listen or check in helps children feel safe. Children remember who made space for them. These moments of connection are often simple, and they're foundational – shaping how children understand care and trust, and what they expect of adults acting in their best interests.



SYSTEM LEADERS, INFLUENCERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

Quality time must be protected in policy, practice and design. It's a core protective factor. Children and young people told us that everyday moments of being seen and heard were how they knew they were safe. When systems put efficiency ahead of time with children, trust erodes. To act in children's best interests, systems must make space for relationships, for listening, and for the sometimes-slow work of building safety.

Remember this...

Consistent, attentive presence is one of the most effective forms of safeguarding. When adults make space for shared time with children – unhurried, relational, and grounded in trust – they create environments where safety is physical, emotional and psychological. Quality time is central to protection and care.

Quality time is a protective force, not a luxury.

Children consistently described moments of shared presence – reading, playing, listening – as the clearest signals of safety.

Presence builds trust, and trust enables protection.

Children and young people use quality time to assess whether adults are attuned, reliable and acting in their best interests. Without this relational foundation, protective systems risk feeling distant or performative.

Simple acts carry profound meaning.

Being read to, held by the hand, or listened to with respect are everyday gestures that were named again and again. They are accessible, repeatable and deeply impactful. Stakeholders must protect time for these moments in homes, schools, and services.

Children recognise the cost and the care - in time given.

Young people understand that quality time requires effort and sacrifice. When adults choose to be present, children feel valued. This perception strengthens relational bonds and affirms their worth.

Relational presence is foundational to best interest decisions.

Whether in policy, education, or care settings, decisions made “in the best interests of the child” must be grounded in relationships where children feel seen and heard. Without this, even well-intentioned actions can miss the mark.

Quality time is a language of safety across ages.

From toddlers to teens, children described quality time as the way they knew they were loved and safe. It's a universal language, one that stakeholders must learn to speak fluently and consistently.

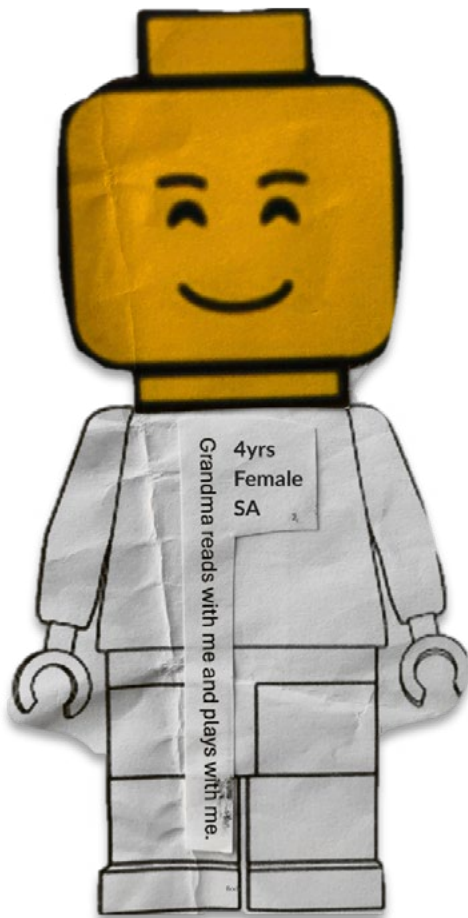


REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In your role, how do you make space for relational presence, not just transactional care?
2. Are there moments when your schedule overrides your ability to be emotionally available? What would it take to shift that?
3. How do you model protective presence for children who may not receive it elsewhere?

Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS



Something a grown up does that shows they care about me

My mum takes me to the park and it makes me feel happy - she always holds my hand and we play together

My age: 5

My gender: Female

My State/Territory: QLD

54 reasons

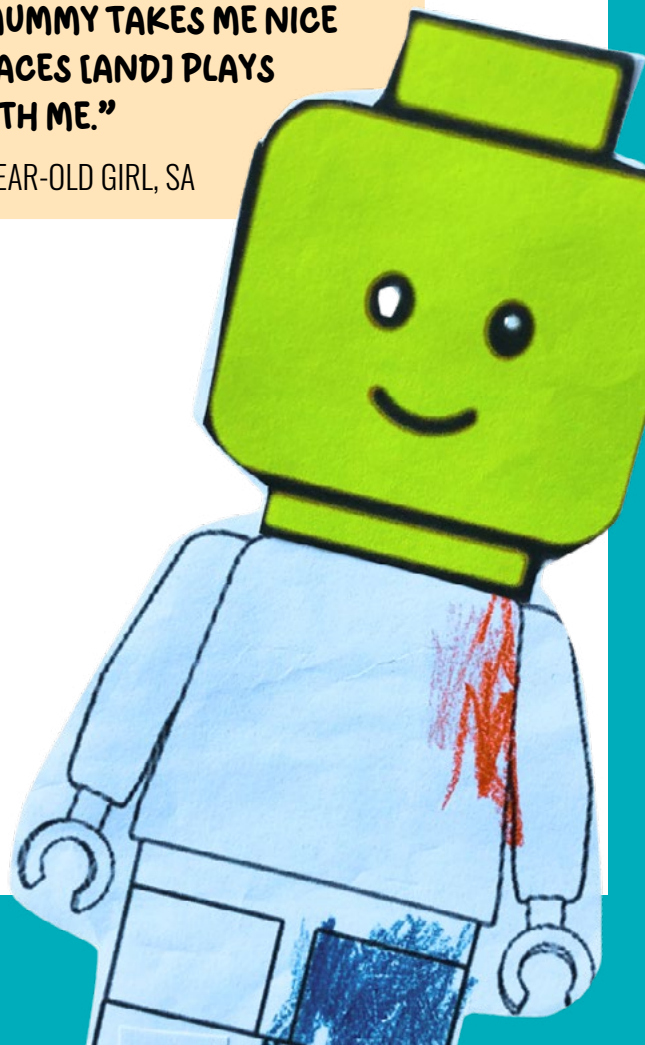
"MUMMY TAKES ME NICE PLACES (AND) PLAYS WITH ME."

4 YEAR-OLD GIRL, SA



"DAD PUTS ME TO BED AND TELLS ME STORIES AND READS ME BOOKS."

4 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NSW



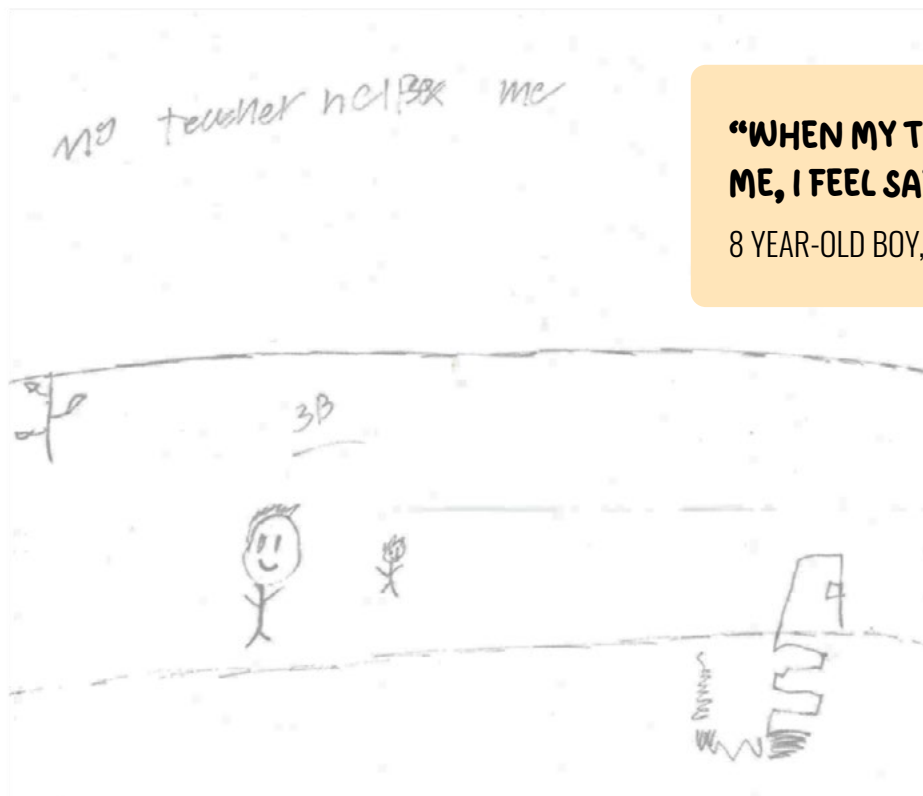
Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 6–12 YEARS



“DAD READS ME BOOKS [THIS SHOWS HE CARES ABOUT ME].”

7 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NT



“WHEN MY TEACHER HELPS ME, I FEEL SAFE.”

8 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD

Children and young people on the record

YOUNG PEOPLE 13–18 YEARS

"[A MOMENT WHEN AN ADULT MADE ME FEEL SAFE AND CARED FOR WAS] AT SCHOOL WHEN MY TEACHER LISTENED TO ME AND TALKED TO ME WITH RESPECT."

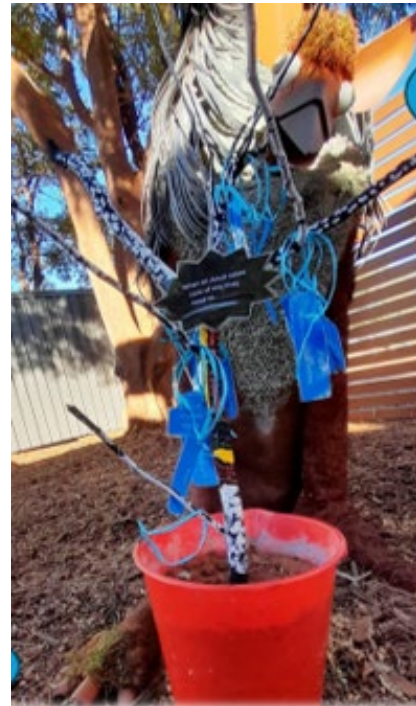
15 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"[ADULTS LOOK AFTER ME BY] SHOWING THAT THEY CARE, TALKING TO ME AND SPENDING TIME WITH ME. THEY LISTEN TO ME."

14 YEAR-OLD GIRL, TAS

"I FEEL SAFE WHEN MUM TAKES TIME OUT OF HER SCHEDULE TO PICK ME UP."

13 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



"[WHEN ADULTS TAKE CARE OF ME THEY NEED TO] CHECK IN WITH ME."

14 YEAR-OLD BOY, WA

"[ONE THING I WILL DO TO MAKE SURE CHILDREN ARE LOOKED AFTER, WHEN I GROW UP IS] SHOW THEM LOVE AND SUPPORT AND I WOULD ALSO BE VERY CARING."

14 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD

INSIGHT 4: DOING FOR VS DOING WITH

Doing for matters, but doing with creates change.

Across ages, children and young people distinguish between being recipients of care and taking part in it. Younger children especially value things done *for* them as signals or care. But increasingly as children develop, adults doing things *with* children and young people signals respect and trust, and shows that adults value their views as well as their needs.

Being cooked for is care – and this matters. But cooking together? That’s connection. Safety works the same way. Being protected is essential. But being *partners* in protection – being asked, included, and supported in the process – can be transformative.

Key themes from children and young people’s contributions

- ‘Doing *with*’ builds agency, trust and emotional safety.
- Children feel most cared for when adults join them in everyday moments.
- Young people value being consulted and included in decisions.
- Physical proximity and shared activity deepen relational bonds.
- Meals, play and problem-solving are relational keys.
- Children can rely on co-regulation through shared action (‘doing *with*’).

POST CONSULTATION INSIGHTS FROM YOUNG ADVISORS

When we asked 54 reasons’ Young Advisors about the difference between parents or caregivers doing *for* them and *with* them, young people shared that when it came to their safety – parents doing things *for* them made them feel most safe. When it came to feeling cared for, however, the things parents did *with* them were most impactful. Young Advisors also reiterated that doing *for* doesn’t mean *doing without* their participation or presence, and that they valued being actively guided in how to do things.

54 reasons’ Young Advisors are young people aged 13–18, who have been part of 54 reasons’ programs and the communities where we work. They are paid employees who provide expertise and insight that informs and guides our work, at practice and governance levels.

What children and young people need from us



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Doing things *with* your child shows them they matter to you. Everyday rituals like cooking, playing and solving problems together build trust and emotional safety. For children with additional needs, co-regulation through shared action can be especially important. Being with them in their rhythms fosters calm, confidence and belonging.



SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Children notice who joins them. Listening while doing, drawing together, walking side by side, or building something together helps trust grow and makes it easier for children to share openly. Being *with* means staying present in the moment when a child hesitates, offering a hand and honouring their pace. Relational consistency – familiar faces, remembered preferences and gentle presence – can turn services into safe places.



SYSTEM LEADERS, INFLUENCERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

Children and young people told us that trust grows when they can see their views change outcomes. Advisory groups, co-design and shared decision-making give children and young people a real role in the systems that support them. When children help shape how they are protected, safety becomes a shared responsibility. Doing *with* children is how systems earn their trust.

Remember this...

Children and young people want adults to act on their behalf and alongside them. Doing *for* children can meet their practical needs, but doing *with* them honours their personhood and builds the trust that helps them feel safe to speak up. It happens in everyday moments: cooking a meal together, working through a problem side by side, and showing children that what they say changes what happens next.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What everyday task could become a moment of connection if done together?
2. How do you co-create with children, not just instruct them?
3. Do your systems (or the systems you engage with) enable '*with*' or default to '*for*'?

Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS



"MUMMY TAKES ME TO THE PLAZA. DADDY BOUGHT ME ICE CREAM. MUMMY BUY CLOTHES FOR ME. MUMMY BOUGHT BAG AND BOTTLE FOR ME. MUMMY FILLED MY WATER BOTTLE. MUMMY GAVE ME A BATH. MUMMY COOKED EGGS FOR ME. DADDY TAKE ME THE CAR WASH. MUMMY TAKE ME TO THE PARK. DADDY PLAY WITH ME. MUMMY AND DADDY TAKE ME [TO] THE KINDERGARTEN. DADDY TAKE ME TO THE PARK WITH MY CYCLE. DADDY PLAY FOOTBALL WITH ME."

3.5 YEAR-OLD BOY, VIC



"MUMMY WASH[ES] THE CLOTHES [AND] PLAY BABIES WITH ME."

4 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



"GRANDMA TAKES ME TO SWIMMING LESSONS AND THEN SHE GETS IN AND WE HAVE A SWIM TOGETHER."

4 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NSW

Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 6–12 YEARS

**"MAKE SURE NO ONE KILLS ME BY
LOCKING DOORS. MAKING SURE I
DON'T DIE. FEEDING ME."**

9 YEAR-OLD BOY, TAS

**"MY MUM HELPS ME CROSS THE
ROAD TO KEEP ME SAFE WHEN
WE'RE PICKING UP MY FRIENDS"**

7 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

**"MY DAD PLAYS GAMES WITH ME
AND MAKES ME LAUGH."**

<7 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD



Children and young people on the record

YOUNG PEOPLE 13–18 YEARS

"WHEN MY MUM WAS ALIVE AND WE WERE YOUNGER SHE WOULD ALWAYS KEEP ME SAFE FROM UNSAFE ADULTS AND MADE SURE I HAD A SAFE ROOF OVER MY HEAD."

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

20%

of contributors highlighted safety measures taken by adults.

Something a grown up does that shows they care about me

"Mum and Dad provide food and shelter for me"

"If I ask Dad for something, he will get it"

"Teachers wouldn't let anything dangerous happen to me"

"Mum praises me for, like, cleaning up"

My age: 16 yrs old

My gender: Female

My State/Territory: QLD

54 reasons

"KNOWING WHERE I AM. COOKED MEALS. WASH CLOTHES. ACCESS TO FOOD. KEEP FEEDING ME."

13 YEAR-OLD BOY, WA

"[GROWN-UPS LOOK AFTER ME WHEN THEY] BUY ME FOOD AND PAY FOR MY TREATS, PAY FOR MY NEEDS, [AND WHEN THEY] MAKE ME COMFORTABLE TO TELL THEM ANYTHING. [WHEN WE] BOND."

15 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

INSIGHT 5: STRONGER TOGETHER

Listening to children is in their best interests

When children are listened to and are taken seriously (Article 12, CRC), adults have the critical information needed to act in their best interests.

When children and young people feel heard, they'll speak up when they feel unsafe. When children and young people feel taken seriously, they'll actively participate in their own care. Listening to children and young people, and following through, communicates to them that they matter to adults, and that adults can be trusted to prioritise their best interests.

Key themes from children and young people's contributions

- Young children feel listened to and taken seriously when adults engage with them in play and experiences they enjoy.
- Young people connect being listened to with being understood.
- Children and young people want adults to know what matters to them.
- Young people don't trust adults to know what's in their best interests when those adults don't engage with them in meaningful ways.
- Young people want adults to care about, meet, and stand up for their best interests.



Age Group Trends:

- 0–5 years: Young children value being heard through play and emotional connection.
- 6–12 years: Children emphasise the importance of being taken seriously and listened to.
- 13–18 years: Adolescents prioritise respect for their opinions and collaborative decision-making.

“A vital element of the process is communicating with children to facilitate meaningful child participation and identify their best interests. Such communication should include informing children about the process and possible sustainable solutions and services, as well as collecting information from children and seeking their views.”

Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRC/C/GC/14. 29 May 2013. General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration. Par 89.

What children and young people need from us



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Children and young people need to know you see them, hear them and believe in them. When you ask for your children's opinions on decisions that impact them, that's what you're communicating to them. When you take your children's views seriously, and explain how they have influenced your decisions, you're helping them to build the critical thinking they'll carry into adulthood.

When children know they can share what matters to them and that it's safe to do this with you, they are more likely to tell you when they're worried, confused or need help. Making two-way communication an everyday habit creates a partnership in which children are active participants in their own care and safety, and work with you in upholding their best interests.



SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Children and young people need you to champion their right to be heard and participate in decisions and actions that impact them. They need to know that you recognise them as the experts in their own lives and are genuinely interested in who they are and who they want to be. This takes curiosity, patience and calm.

When they share what matters to them, take children and young people's views seriously, and let them know in a timely way how you have acted on what they told you. Persevere when they don't yet have the words, the confidence or the trust, and pay attention to what they can't say as well as what they do.

NB. Upholding children's right to be heard means knowing and applying the [Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation](#) in your everyday practice.



SYSTEM LEADERS, INFLUENCERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

Your decisions make or break outcomes for children and young people. Every child sees and experiences the world differently – so our work alongside children needs to keep adapting. Children and young people need you to involve them, deliberately, in how the systems that protect and care for them are designed and run. If you come with honesty and keep their best interests first, children and young people will show you what only they can see – and help you make changes that work.

Remember this...

Listening to children is in their best interests. When adults take children's perspectives seriously, they strengthen protective relationships and systems, improve decision-making and foster environments of mutual respect.

Children want to, and are equipped to, actively contribute to their own wellbeing. They hold knowledge and are experts in their own lives. Listening to children and young people and taking their views seriously means we are better able to act in their best interests.

We are stronger when we work together, and it starts with how we listen to children and young people about their care and safety.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How often do you ask children what they think, and how often do you act on it?
2. What structures in your practice invite children's voices, and which ones silence them?
3. What would it take to treat children as co-designers of the services meant to protect and care for them?

"MOST ADULTS CONSIDER SAFETY AND CARE FOR ME SINCE THEY TRY TO DO THINGS THAT BENEFIT MY WELLBEING.

THEY MAKE DECISIONS WITH THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN IN MIND WHICH IS REALLY IMPORTANT.

BUT ADULTS MIGHT NOT ALWAYS LISTEN TO CHILDREN'S VOICES WHEN MAKING THOSE DECISIONS, THIS CAN MAKE IT FEEL LIKE OUR OPINIONS AREN'T APPRECIATED OR ARE LESS VALUABLE THAN THEY SHOULD BE."

– 16 YEAR-OLD BOY, VIC

Children and young people on the record

CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS



**"I LOVE THE LIBRARY.
MY MUM TAKES ME LOTS
AND LOTS."**

4 YEAR-OLD, WA

**"MY DAD AND MY MUM FEED
ME. THEY PUT ME TO BED. THEY
CUDDLE ME AND KISS ME. THEY
HIDE ME IN DANGER."**

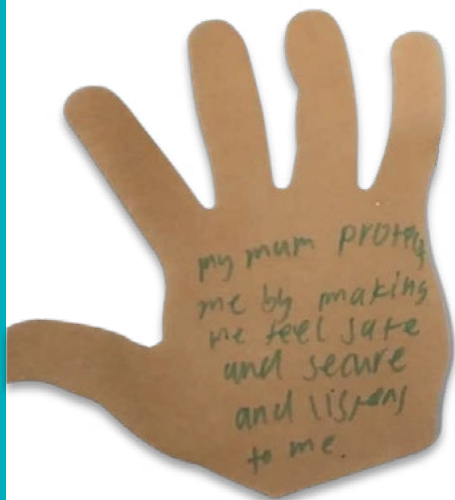
4 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD



For children in their early years, there were many examples of equating care and safety with having a trusted adult share in activities the child enjoys.

Adults - especially parents, caregivers and support workers - collaborating with children in this way is the developmentally appropriate equivalent of 'taking them seriously'.

CHILDREN 6-12 YEARS



**"ALL MOTHERS
SHOULD HAVE TO
CARE FOR HER
CHILDREN [AND]
MAKE SURE YOU
ARE OK."**

10 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

**"MY TEACHER LISTENS
TO ME [THIS MAKES ME
FEEL SAFE]"**

10 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

**"NO DANGEROUS THINGS. ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT
YOU DON'T PUT A KID IN AN ADULT ARGUMENT.
HAVE A CLEAN PLACE FOR THEM TO FEEL CALM AND
ALWAYS HELP THEM."**

11 YEAR-OLD GIRL, TAS



Children and young people on the record

YOUNG PEOPLE 13–18 YEARS

"[TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE] I WOULD HELP KIDS WHEN THEY GET INTO TROUBLE. I WOULD LISTEN TO THEM."

18 YEAR-OLD BOY, QLD

"EVEN THOUGH ADULTS DO DIFFERENT THINGS FOR ME IN MY LIFE ALL OF THEM CAN DO THINGS THAT MAKE ME FEEL SEEN. THESE THINGS CAN INCLUDE TALKING TO ME AND CHECKING UP ON ME REGULARLY OR TRYING TO NOTICE IF SOMETHING MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, LIKE IF I FEEL UNSAFE."

17 YEAR-OLD GIRL, NT

"ADULTS NEED TO LISTEN CLOSELY TO CHILDREN AND TAKE OUR WORDS MORE SERIOUSLY. THEY NEED TO EXPLAIN THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE THAT AFFECT US SO THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHY THEY ARE MAKING THEM."

THEY HAVE TO DO THINGS IN A WAY THAT PRIORITISES OUR BEST INTEREST OVER CONVENIENCE OR OUTSIDE PRESSURE FROM OTHER PEOPLE. SHOWING RESPECT AND EMPATHY CAN BE THE DIFFERENCE IN MAKING CHILDREN FEEL SAFE AND CARED FOR."

17 YEAR-OLD BOY, VIC

"[I FEEL SAFE WHEN ADULTS] LISTEN TO ME."

13 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD

"FOR STARTERS, LISTEN TO US. NOT ONLY LISTEN TO OUR WORDS, BUT OUR BODY LANGUAGE."

16 YEAR-OLD GIRL, QLD



LISTENING, ACTING AND UPHOLDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

When we engage with children and young people through processes like this consultation, our first responsibility is always to them – both those who took part and children and young people more widely.

Commitments we've made

As adults, it's essential that we hear from children and young people, take their views seriously and act on them.

After considering what children and young people told us about upholding their best interests, the 54 reasons team made eight specific commitments that we are progressing and embedding across our organisation. We're sharing these here for transparency and as examples of steps that organisations can take to act on what children have told us.

Improving and embedding practice at 54 reasons

- 1 Review relational practice across 54 reasons to better understand how our relationships with clients are currently experienced by them, identify strengths and barriers, and inform practical, child-centred improvements and future service design.
- 2 Review relevant resources aimed at supporting caregivers' relationship with their children and young people.
- 3 Explore and review guidance on appropriate physical contact and proximity in our direct work with children, ensuring alignment with safeguarding requirements, child-led consent, cultural safety and developmental considerations.
- 4 In line with *child i view* (54 reasons' whole-of-organisation, child rights-based practice framework), increase our focus on how our work builds the capability and confidence of caregivers to effectively advocate for their children.
- 5 Elevate children and young people's insights and voices through public, sector and government-facing forums.
- 6 Share children and young people's contributions to stimulate discussion and action on what children should be able to expect from services and adults.
- 7 Leverage children and young people's contributions to stimulate discussion and action on what children should be able to expect from Australian governments in relation to their care and safety, and the systems that should protect their best interests.
- 8 Explore practical tools to help stakeholders make decisions in children's best interests and self-assess their processes for this.

Being accountable to children and young people at 54 reasons

Being accountable to children and young people means that we seriously consider their views in decisions that impact them, and that we report back to them on what we've heard and how their views have influenced our decision making. Being accountable to children is one of the [Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation](#), Save the Children's global best practice standards, which are embedded in 54 reasons' Child Participation Framework.

Some of the ways we're demonstrating accountability to children and young people who participated in this consultation:

- Sharing back to children what we heard, what we've learned and what action we're taking through relevant, child-friendly resources, in line with 54 reasons' Child Participation Framework and Standards. This started with closing the feedback loop with the children and young people who participated in this consultation:
 - Report-back to children
 - Report-back to young people.
- Developing a detailed internal report that explores in depth what children told us, how we can apply what we've learned within 54 reasons, and recommendations for whole-of-organisation action.
- Integrating key insights and contributions from children and young people into 54 reasons' ongoing internal 'child voice reporting' and mechanisms for accountability to children and young people, through which:
 - our Senior Management Team considers children's views and makes key decisions informed by those views, including the eight commitments outlined earlier
 - our whole organisation receives relevant insights and practical guidance on how to apply the insights in their individual roles.
- Showcasing key insights and early analysis of children's views shared through this consultation to leading child rights advocates, system leaders and sector peers through 54 reasons' first national Child Rights Symposium in November 2025.
- Developing this public report, along with other public-facing resources, to share learning from children and young people with other stakeholders in their lives
- Sharing children and young people's views widely, as they intended, to raise awareness, educate and advocate for system change that makes the right difference for children and young people.

**"MUM PROTECTS US EVERY TIME
WE FEEL UNSAFE, NOW WE ALL
LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER."**

(11YRS, FEMALE, QLD)

SHARING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORDS

Children and young people shared their views, ideas and experiences with us so that adults could better understand what matters to them. Everything in this report is published with their consent. Sharing their words is also part of our promise to them: that adults beyond 54 reasons will learn from what they told us.

If you quote or share their words, please help us honour that trust and uphold their rights: use quotes exactly as they appear here, keep to their intent, and include the context in which they were shared with us.

Photo: Michael Chilton / Save the Children Australia



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Publicly available resources

Additional resources are available, summarising key aspects and insights of this report and what children and young people shared about their best interests. We hope they help to share children's insights as widely as possible, with the people they are relevant to.

- Report-back to children
- Report-back to young people
- Key takeaways for practitioners and service providers
- *About the consultation poster*
- *Insight #1: All about relationships poster*
- *Insight #2: More than talk poster*
- *Insight #3: Making space poster*
- *Insight #4: Doing for vs doing with poster*
- *Insight #5: Stronger together poster*

You can find them all at www.54reasons.org.au/resources/in-our-best-interests

Contact us

For enquiries, please contact: info@54reasons.org.au, or go to www.54reasons.org.au/contact



Save the Children

54 reasons