Freedom and Independence

Being acknowledged

Being safe

Good friends

Wellbeing

Good education

Loving supportive family

The basics

Fun and activity

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON WELLBEING

Some messages from Western Australian children and young people on wellbeing…

Wellbeing
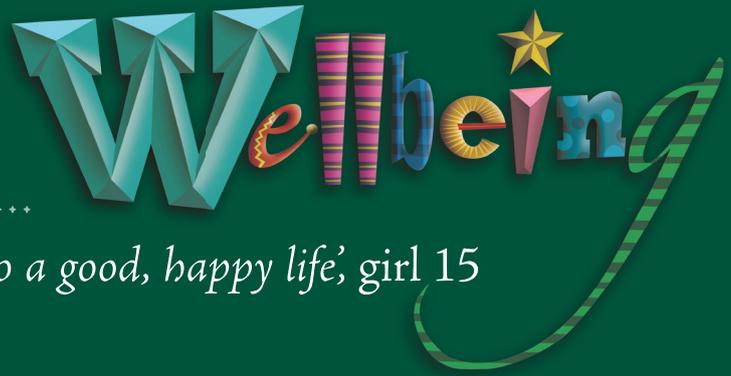
On having a good childhood…

'A good childhood is the key to a good, happy life', girl 15

On being happy…

'When I'm happy I have a smile, I show you my teeth and smile… when you're happy sometimes your heart beats really fast', boy 5

On having a good day…

'I feel happy when I get to go to the pool with mum', boy 7

On having a bad day…

'I get picked on, people call me names… it makes me angry and I want to punish them', girl 13

On having a loving, supportive family…

'A loving, caring family is what everyone needs', girl 9

On having good friends…

'Good friends have the ability to make you feel good and make you smile', girl 17

On having freedom…

'Kids should be free to get out in the open, go by yourself, climb trees and things', boy 9

On having the basics…

'No money and you're that hungry, no food at home', boy 10

On fun and activity…

'It's a good feeling, doing good at sport', boy 12

On getting a good education…

'Sometimes people don't get a good education then don't get a job and can't afford things', boy 10

On being acknowledged…

'They [should] *have a special thing where they acknowledge kids for being excellent',* boy 13

On being safe…

'Playing with my mates makes me feel confident, safe and loved', boy 13

On having a good future…

'Get drugs and alcohol off this world so kids can have a good life', boy 10

On listening to us…

'They all just think you're like a little child – you don't know anything – even though you watch the news and you understand all the problems', girl 12

A THANK YOU FROM THE RESEARCH TEAM

Between September 2009 and March 2010, 959 children and young people across Western Australia freely gave their time to tell us what makes them feel good and able to live their lives to the full.

To each one of you, we say, thank you.

And to the many parents, guardians, and the staff of schools and organisations who supported the involvement of the children and young people in this important research, we thank you, too.

Front cover: Children and young people participating in this research considered these to be the most important contributors to their wellbeing.

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Executive Summary

This is the report of a major research study on what children and young people considered important to their wellbeing. The research was conducted for the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia, Ms Michelle Scott, and was carried out between May 2009 and April 2010.

Children and young people aged 5–18[1] years spoke about their experiences and ideas, what mattered to them, what they wanted for themselves and others their age, and what they hoped for in the future.

A project reference group provided expert advice and ethics approvals were obtained from the Department of Education, the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Information and Ethics Committee, the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum Research Committee, and two Aboriginal health services in the Kimberley.

Sample

The sample comprised 959 children and young people[2] (51% boys, 49% girls) from across Western Australia:

- 67% were from the Perth metropolitan area; 33% from regional and remote locations
- 28% were aged 5-12 years; 71% were aged 13–18 years[3]
- 10% were Indigenous
- 6% had a disability
- 4% were in foster care.

The research also included children and young people with learning difficulties, children and young people with chronic health conditions, newly arrived migrant children, and young people who were carers for their parents or siblings.

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[1] The research was aimed at children and young people aged 5–17 years, but a few 18-year-olds participated because the recruitment of participants was undertaken largely through schools and these young people were still in Year 12.

[2] Throughout this report, participants aged 5–12 years are referred to as children and those aged 13–18 years as young people.

[3] Ten participants did not provide their age.

Methodology

There were three components to the research: a literature search, qualitative research (involving 377 participants) and quantitative research (with 582 respondents to an online survey).

Qualitative research included the conduct of small focus groups (for 8–18-year-olds from across the State), artwork and storytelling sessions (for 5–8-year-olds from across the State), a mural painting and storytelling session (for 6–12-year-olds who were recently arrived migrants living in Perth), an interactive forum (for 14–17-year-olds living in Perth), a photographic activity (for 16-year-olds living in Perth), and a small hard copy survey (for 15-year-olds living in a South-West town). The online survey was for 10–17-year-olds from across the State.

Key findings

The majority of children and young people taking part in the research felt that they had a pretty good life. They were aware of and concerned about others who they considered less fortunate than themselves. Even those experiencing hardship were concerned about other children and young people.

For the children and young people who participated in this research, the most important aspects of wellbeing were:

- a loving, supportive family
- good friends
- fun and activity
- being safe
- a good education
- the basics (such as food, clothing, shelter and enough money to live)
- acknowledgement
- freedom and independence.

The participants felt that all children and young people needed these eight things to live a full life. Each is summarised below:

A loving, supportive family

Children and young people taking part in the qualitative research believed that everyone their age needs love, care, support and good parents. The majority enjoyed the warmth, acceptance and security that all wished for and needed. Many loved, admired and appreciated their parents and over three-quarters (78%) of respondents to the online survey reported feeling loved and cared for. Children and young people enjoyed being with their families and more than half (56%) would like to spend more time with them.

Children and young people said they didn't like family stress or conflict, especially when parents were drunk or fighting.

Good friends

Children and young people delighted in having friends with whom to share good times, just playing or hanging out. They disliked it when their friends did not get along and over half (55%) of respondents to the online survey said this made them feel upset. Young people considered their friends to be an important source of support and understanding and the majority (86%) said they had enough good friends – a positive finding given the importance they attached to friendship and the understanding and support that came from good relationships with their peers. Many young people considered that only friends could truly understand how they felt and that friends were the only ones they trusted to tell their problems to.

Executive Summary

Fun and activity

Most children enjoyed team games and sports but loved unstructured play. In remote and regional areas they seemed to have more freedom to explore and be active. Young people made the most of their opportunities to socialise and be active but said there were few facilities for them.

A lack of adequate, clean recreation facilities was frequently commented on in this research. Young people believed there was a clear association between boredom and bad behaviour, including property damage, getting drunk and using drugs. Children need space and freedom to enjoy spontaneous play and explore public space without adults. Dirty parks and unsafe play areas reduced opportunities for them to enjoy their childhood.

Being safe

The majority of children and young people felt safe and cared for at home. However, bullying emerged as a major concern in the qualitative research, more in some schools than in others, and was often said to be hurtful and distressing. This finding was corroborated by the online survey, with responses indicating that 61% of the children and young people had been bullied, half of these within the last year. One-third of the sample indicated they had both been bullied and bullied someone else.

Some young people also reported feeling scared at train and bus stations and in their neighbourhoods. Drugs and alcohol were said to be part of the problem. Being scared of public transport reduced opportunities for socialising or getting to work and made young people more reliant on their parents – just when they wanted more freedom and independence.

A good education

There was widespread agreement amongst children and young people that a good education is vital, but achieving it was a struggle for some, particularly Indigenous children in the Kimberley who aspired to go to school every day and understood how important this was for their future.

For most children and young people, school was the place where they could see their friends and for some it was where they could escape family problems. There was broad agreement amongst young people that school workloads could be more evenly distributed to make things more manageable and less pressured for them.

The basics

Most participants did not have to worry about having adequate food, clothing, shelter and money to live but some Indigenous children described being hungry and feeling sad, lonely and angry. Indigenous participants in this research had witnessed problems caused by alcohol, including people fighting and messing up houses, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in the Kimberley reported that some children were being neglected.

Attitudes to money and possessions varied. Those who owned iPods, mobile phones or other such possessions enjoyed them without believing these were more important than good relationships, achieving the best results they can at school and getting out and about in the company of friends and family. Most agreed that money does not buy happiness but contributes to it.

Acknowledgement

Children and young people wanted acknowledgement of the things that were important to them including being personally valued and appreciated, especially by parents, friends and teachers. Children and young people wanted their parents to be proud of them and, when they were, they wanted to be told. They spoke of the need to feel special when they did well and said this boosted their belief in themselves.

Indigenous children and young people wanted a strong culture and to have the positive things about their traditional values acknowledged and appreciated.

Freedom and independence

Children wanted to be free to get out and do things without having parents managing every aspect of their lives. Many young people were satisfied with the amount of freedom they had and those who wanted more recognised they also needed guidelines and boundaries.

Survey responses indicated that 62% would like to have more say in decisions affecting their lives and about half were not convinced that people listened enough to what they said.

Some were pursuing their independence by taking part-time jobs to provide money for social activities and to contribute to the cost of their education.

The children and young people identified some barriers to living a full life. Some of these, such as bullying, a lack of recreation facilities, family conflict and feeling scared in public places, are mentioned above. In addition, some young people reported feeling overwhelmed by their school workload and doubted their capacity to cope. Children and young people were also concerned about big issues such as pollution and climate change, but most were unsure what they could do to help, given their age and the size of the problems. Indigenous children and young people in the Kimberley reported going hungry, parents spending all their money on alcohol and neglecting their children, high rates of family deaths and being scared that more family members might die.

Children and young people mostly shared their worries and problems with family and friends and for many this worked well and was sufficient to deal with day-to-day knocks and setbacks, but some said they kept their problems to themselves. It was also evident that some did not trust teachers, counsellors or other professionals or saw their problems as not important enough to justify asking for their help.

When asked whom they most admired, almost all children and young people talked about people in their own lives, in particular their friends and parents, because of the love and support they provide. Even the children who admired celebrities and sports stars tended to admire them more for their personal attributes and attitudes than for their celebrity status.

Children and young people had plenty of ideas on what could be done to improve the lives of others their age. Many of the ideas were about making life better for those who were younger or doing it tough. One very clear message was that parents had a responsibility to care for and support their children.

Most children and young people had high expectations for the future and were optimistic and confident about achieving their goals. They generally felt that fulfilling their hopes for the future was largely up to them, with the help of teachers and families, and most were prepared to work hard to achieve their goals.

Children and young people were forthright and positive in their views on what helps them to live their lives to the full. What they wanted most was to enjoy their lives and to have the opportunity to live well.

Chapter 1: The Project
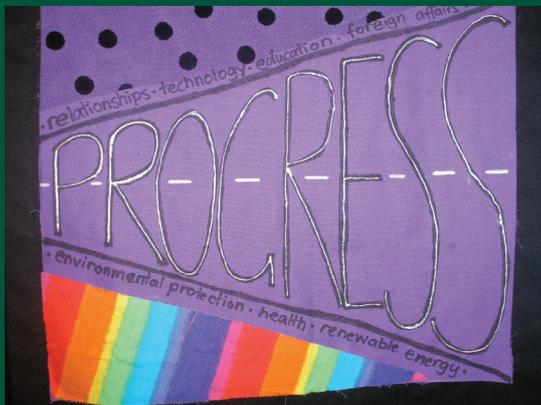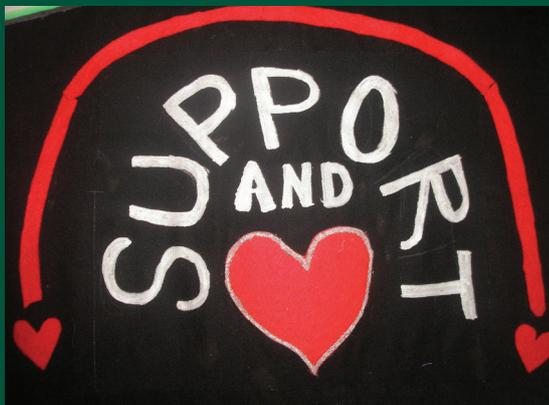
INTRODUCTION

In April 2009, following a tender process, the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia commissioned Nexus Strategic Solutions, in collaboration with Sankey Associates and Professor Janet Fletcher, Director of the Child Study Centre at The University of Western Australia (UWA), to undertake a research project to seek the views of children and young people on their wellbeing.

The Commissioner is an independent statutory authority whose mission is to work with children and young people, families, community and government to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia. *The Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* defines wellbeing as "the care, development, education, health and safety of children and young people." The Act requires the Commissioner to "conduct, coordinate, sponsor, participate in and promote research into matters relating to the wellbeing of children and young people" and to "consult with children and young people from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and age groups throughout Western Australia", having special regard for the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and to children and young people who are in any way vulnerable or disadvantaged.

This research project was designed to help meet those obligations. The specific objectives of the research were to:

+ obtain the views and perspectives of children and young people across Western Australia on what is important to their wellbeing; and
+ engage directly with a mix of children and young people across Western Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander[4] and vulnerable or disadvantaged children and young people.

Ultimately, 959[5] children and young people aged 5 to 18 years, from across Western Australia, participated in the research.[6] This report seeks to explain how that research was done and, more importantly, to report the views expressed by the children and young people.

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[4] In this report, the term "Indigenous" is used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children and young people.

[5] The precise total of children and young people who participated in the research cannot be guaranteed because some may have participated in both the qualitative and quantitative (online survey) research.

[6] A breakdown of the demographics of the sample group is provided at Attachment 1.

Scope

The scope of the project was limited to the design and conduct of the research, a summary of findings and identification of significant issues. The research was focused on reporting the views of children and young people to the Commissioner, for her further consideration, and therefore did not include the identification of implications nor the making of recommendations.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Research team

The research team comprised the following ten people:

+ Ms Jan Saggers (Project Leader), Chair, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Ms Mary Sankey, Managing Director, Sankey Associates
+ Professor Janet Fletcher, Director, Child Study Centre, UWA
+ Ms Jan Stuart, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Ms Marie Finlay, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Ms Maxinne Sclanders, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Ms Rhonda Murphy, Yarmintali Consultancy and Associate, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Mr Danny Ford, Associate, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Ms Caroline Adupa, Associate, Nexus Strategic Solutions
+ Mr Issihaka Toure, Associate, Nexus Strategic Solutions.

The project team reported regularly to the Commissioner, her contract manager Ms Trish Heath (Principal Policy Officer), and her Project Reference Group.

Commissioner's Project Reference Group

The Commissioner established a Project Reference Group to provide expert advice and feedback to her regarding the project. It comprised:

+ Professor Trish Harris, Emeritus Professor, Murdoch University
+ Ms Beth Shaw, Articled Clerk, State Solicitor's Office and former United Nations Youth Representative
+ Ms Adele Cox, Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health and Rural Clinical School of WA, UWA
+ Ms Jocelyn Jones, PhD Candidate, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (June – December 2009)
+ Ms Leah Bonson, Aboriginal Adviser, Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) (February – May 2010).

Children and Young People Advisory Group

A group of 17 boys and girls aged 15–16 years, from a variety of government and private schools across the State, agreed to form an advisory group for the project. All had been participants in Curtin University's annual student leadership program, the Sir Charles Court Young Leaders' Program. The group provided advice on issues such as the design and wording of the research questions and the name of the project (MyVoice).

In addition to the Advisory Group, many more children and young people participated in the testing of the qualitative research discussion guides and the online survey.

STANDARDS AND ETHICS

In conducting the research, steps were taken to ensure its integrity. These are outlined below.

Ethics approvals

The project team was mindful of the need to be respectful of its obligations to the research participants and to their families, guardians, schools and communities. The team therefore sought and obtained ethics approvals from bodies representing their interests.[7] Those organisations were:

- The former Department of Education and Training (now Department of Education);
- The Western Australian Aboriginal Health Information and Ethics Committee;
- The Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum Research Committee; and
- Two Aboriginal health services located in the Kimberley.

In addition, the Commissioner's Project Reference Group provided advice to the research team on ethics matters.

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[7] The information required by these bodies varied, but focused largely on consent arrangements, confidentiality commitments, record-keeping requirements and the management of interviews and other research strategies.

Police clearances and Working With Children checks

All researchers who came into contact with children had current police clearances and Working with Children checks.

Consent arrangements

All research strategies for the project, with the exception of the online survey, required the active, written consent of the participants and of their parents/guardians.

In rare cases where written consent was not practicable, due to difficulties with reading or writing or because of a disability, verbal consent was sufficient. In these circumstances, the researchers made a written note of the consent.

The consent arrangements ensured that:

- participants could withdraw their consent at any time; and
- where a child no longer wished to participate, duty of care was maintained.

Various consent forms tailored to the different research activities were produced for the project. There were, however, two standard forms that applied to the vast majority of participants:

1. A form for those of secondary school age (generally, 13–18 years). This form gave priority to the consent of the young person, with the parents being asked to indicate if they supported their son/daughter's position. The signatures of both the young person and a parent were required.
2. A form for those of primary school age (generally, 5–12 years). This form gave priority to the consent of the parent and asked the parent to explain the research to the child. The parent was asked to sign the form and to request, where possible, the child to write his/her name to indicate consent.

Attached to each consent form were two information sheets – one for the child or young person and one for the parent or guardian. These sheets contained information on a variety of matters such as the purpose of the research, who was doing the research, what the participant would be asked to do, confidentiality matters, the recording of discussions, and the management of research records. In respect of one group of newly arrived migrant students (for whom English was not their first language), the consent forms and information sheets were simplified and translated. Further details on consent arrangements can be found in copies of the standard consent forms and information sheets at Attachment 2.

In the case of younger children where artwork formed part of their activity, photographs were taken of the artwork both as a memory aid for the researchers and because the team planned to reproduce some photographs in the report. The consent information sheets stated that a small number of photographs may be used in the report and that researchers would seek the permission of participants at a later stage should a photograph of their artwork be selected.

One of the research activities involved some young people being filmed for a public video on young people's views on wellbeing. The participants were advised of the nature of the activity and their written consent (along with that of their parent's/guardian's) was obtained prior to the activity.

The online survey for 10–17-year-olds required only the passive consent of participants in the form of a "rules" box that required them to provide consent in order to gain access to the survey. No parental consent was required.

Chapter 2: Our Approach

Management of group discussions

In order to ensure the safety and comfort of participants, children and young people were interviewed mainly in small groups. For younger children, the groups were smaller (generally 3–6 participants). For older children and young people, the groups were often larger (generally 5–10 participants). On rare occasions participants were interviewed individually (e.g. about their individual artwork). This was always done in close proximity to other adults and/or to children who were participating in the research.

Management of disclosures

The researchers recognised the possibility of participants making disclosures about matters that may pose a serious risk to them, during the course of the research. After discussion with the Commissioner, the Project Reference Group and the Department of Education and Training, it was agreed that if such disclosures were made the researchers would advise the Principal or other relevant manager at the school or organisation concerned. This process was explained in the information sheets provided to children and young people and their parents/guardians. It was also agreed that the practice of "protective interrupting" would be applied to minimise the prospect of participants revealing sensitive information in a group situation.

Testing arrangements

In designing the discussion guides and research questions for the project, the input of children and young people was critical as it was important that the intent of the questions was clear to them and the language used was appropriate. This was a challenge given that the research was intended to cover:

* a wide age range, 5–18 years; and
* a wide range of socio-economic and cultural participants, from Indigenous children and young people in the Kimberley, to newly arrived migrants in the city and children and young people from farming families in the South-West and Wheatbelt.

The testing arrangements were designed to reflect this diversity.

Testing of the discussion guides for the qualitative component of the research involved over 114 children and young people.[8] They came from UWA's Child Study Centre, an inner-city primary school, a primary school in the Kimberley, a district high school in the Kimberley, and various high schools in Perth and the South-West. Feedback from the testing indicated that children and young people found the questions easy to understand and that they elicited the information required to meet the research aims of the project. Nonetheless, the feedback did result in some minor changes being made to both the language and tense of the questions and also to the order in which the questions were asked.

To test the online survey for the quantitative component of the research, students from three schools (a primary school in a high socio-economic area of Perth, a senior high school in the outer suburbs of Perth, and a district high school in the Kimberley) were asked to "test drive" the survey online and to answer some questions about the survey. A total of 84 students participated. The testing revealed that the survey was easy to answer and took only a short time to complete. Only minor modifications and additions were made as a result.

Details on the testing processes for both the qualitative and quantitative research are provided at Attachment 3.

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[8] The precise number of participants in the testing process for the qualitative research questions is not known as one of the teachers who conducted the testing did not record how many children were present.

Transcription and records management

All discussions with children and young people were audio recorded and transcribed (with the exception of discussions that took place at the Perth interactive forum). All participants had been advised of the recording process prior to the discussions and their consent (and that of their parents or guardians) had been obtained.

The recordings formed part of the data collected for the research. The data will be held at the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office and retained for five years, at which time it will be deleted. It will be subject to the provisions of the *State Records Act 2000.*

Team training

To ensure that the researchers were appropriately skilled in interviewing children and young people, team training was provided by Professor Janet Fletcher and her colleague at the UWA Child Study Centre, Dr Robin Harvey.

The training focused on strategies for:

- making children and young people comfortable
- building trust and rapport
- active listening
- interviewing Indigenous children and young people
- managing consent, confidentiality requirements and disclosures.

Confidentiality and other ethics requirements

In conducting the research, the project team ensured that all obligations stipulated in the ethics approvals from the bodies mentioned earlier were met. In addition, where specific requests were made by organisations that facilitated access to children and young people for the purposes of the research, those requests were met.

It is important to mention that the approval of the Department of Education and Training was conditional upon no government school being publicly identified as a participant in the research. In this report, therefore, the names of all government schools have been withheld. Only a brief description of each school's general location and socio-economic standing is provided.

Chapter 3: What We Did

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology adopted by the research team in the conduct of the research. It covers the:

- research aims
- research methodology
- research strategies and sample
- recruitment of participants
- use of incentives
- three components of the research
- data analysis
- considerations in interpreting the data.

Research aims

After the contract was awarded, the research aims for the project were refined in consultation with the Commissioner and her Project Reference Group. It was agreed that the research aimed to explore the following three questions:

1. What do children and young people in Western Australia perceive as important to their wellbeing?
   - What do these things look like (healthy body? lots of friends? freedom? money? somewhere to live?)
   - Where are they found (natural environment? cultural-religious ceremony? school? part-time job? home? grandma's place?)
   - When (all the time? every day? once a week? in the future?)
   - Who (mum? dad? family? friend? teacher? pet?)
   - How does it make them feel (excited? happy? safe? respected? fantastic? desperate because they don't have it?)
2. What do they perceive as barriers to achieving wellbeing?
3. What makes it easier to achieve wellbeing?

The discussion guides reflecting these aims are located at Attachment 4.

Research methodology

This research project was aimed at discovering what Western Australia's children and young people believe and value about their wellbeing. It was envisaged that their perceptions of wellbeing (its presence and absence) could be multi-faceted and may include physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. The project methodology was therefore designed around exploring the concept of wellbeing from the unique perspective of children and young people, and not from the perspective of adults. As a consequence, the project team did not adopt any of the established research frameworks and domains from past studies of children's and young people's wellbeing, and the project was entitled "My Voice" to reflect the project team's intention to capture and report the voice of children and young people. Similarly, while the project was focused on exploring children and young people's views of their wellbeing, it was described to them as "a research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and living their lives to the full." The term "wellbeing" was not widely used in project communications as it is not well understood. [9]

Considerations in developing the methodology included:

- the broad nature of the inquiry (in contrast to a focus on a single issue such as school, play, health);
- the broad range of demographics in terms of age (5–18 years), location (metropolitan, regional, remote), cultural background (Indigenous, non-Indigenous) and socio-economic status;
- the range of capacity to verbalise thoughts and feelings, and differing literacy levels;
- the need to develop approaches which optimise engagement and communication with young people;
- creative ways of engaging with hard-to-reach groups and obtaining their insights;
- using online techniques to best effect, including attracting interest and response; and
- the Commissioner's requirement for culturally appropriate, systematic and innovative data- collection tools that involve different techniques for different ages or age groupings up to 18 years of age, backgrounds and locations.[10]

Research strategies and sample

In consultation with the Commissioner and the Project Reference Group, the project team selected a number of different research techniques to engage different age groups, ability levels and cultural groups. The selected strategies were:

- small focus groups (for 8–18-year-olds from across the State)
- artwork and storytelling (for young children aged 5–8 years from across the State)
- mural painting and storytelling (for recently arrived migrants of primary school age)
- an interactive forum (for 14–17-year-olds living in Perth)
- a photographic activity (for 16-year-olds living in Perth)
- a hard copy survey (for 14–16-year-olds living in the South-West)
- an online survey (for 10–17-year-olds from across the State).

Together, the focus groups and surveys offered high validity and reliability, while the artwork and storytelling, mural painting, forum and photographic activity offered the potential to engage a broader range of participants, provide fresh insights, and capture the voice of children and young people in different ways. These multiple data sources were selected to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

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[9] The online survey explored children and young people's understanding of the term "wellbeing" by asking "What does wellbeing mean to you?" Only 49% of participants responded to the question and there were varied responses (see Chapter 4 for further details).

[10] Request for Tender 2008/02891 Statement of Requirements.

Locations chosen for the qualitative research were:

* Perth metropolitan area (in low, medium and high socio-economic areas, and with two locations catering for specific cultural groups)
* A Wheatbelt farming town
* A South-West regional centre
* A South-West town
* A remote Kimberley town
* A Kimberley regional centre.

The online survey was available across the State.

The intended sample included roughly equal numbers of boys and girls from diverse cultural backgrounds (with particular emphasis on Indigenous participants).

In addition, certain specific groups of children and young people were included in the research:

* geographically isolated young people who access education services using virtual classroom technology
* children and young people who are carers
* children and young people with chronic health conditions, attending Princess Margaret Hospital
* children and young people with disabilities (in this case, children with cerebral palsy)
* children and young people living in foster care
* Indigenous young people living away from home at a college in Perth.

More information on the children and young people who participated in the research is provided later in this chapter.

Recruiting participants

Most participants in the research were recruited through government schools, with the full support of the Department of Education and Training. Discussion groups and interviews were conducted at government schools as follows: five senior high schools, one high school, three district high schools, three primary schools, one early childhood education centre, one intensive English centre (primary school), and two specialist schools (one for geographically isolated students and one for students with health conditions).[11]

Other organisations that facilitated access to children and young people were:

* Independent Schools: Methodist Ladies' College, Georgiana Molloy Anglican School, Bunbury Catholic College, Christian Brothers' College Fremantle, and Clontarf Aboriginal College
* Non-Government Organisations: Carers' WA, CREATE, The Centre for Cerebral Palsy, South-West VET-Link, and Inspire Foundation
* State Government Agencies: the Department for Communities and the Department for Child Protection
* Sporting Organisations: Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club and West Perth Football Club.

[11] Individual government schools are not named in the report, in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's ethics requirements.

Use of incentives

Incentives were not routinely offered to research participants and most were instead given a MyVoice bookmark at the conclusion of activities. There were three exceptions:

- At the request of CREATE (the peak body representing children in care) $30 gift vouchers were provided to children and young people in care who contributed to the research. This was in recognition of the fact that they were involved in their own time (either after school or on weekends) and that some incurred travel expenses.
- The young people who attended the Perth forum were each given a MyVoice certificate of appreciation and $10, together with the bookmark. This was in recognition of the fact that they had given up a Sunday afternoon to attend the forum and had also incurred some travel expenses.
- The children and young people nominated by Carers' WA were also given $10 each, as well as the bookmark and a letter of thanks. This was in recognition of the fact that they had given up some of their time on a Saturday morning to participate in the research.

Three components of the research

The research comprised the following three components, conducted in this order:

1. literature search;
2. qualitative research; and
3. quantitative research.

The research project began with a literature search on wellbeing studies based on direct input from children and young people. The literature search helped to inform the selection and design of the qualitative research strategies that followed. These, in turn, informed the development of the quantitative research (the online survey).

Data analysis

Qualitative research

All the discussions for the qualitative research were audio-recorded and transcribed, except for those with geographically isolated young people where the radio-satellite technology did not allow this to happen. In this instance, a write-up of the discussion was provided by the teacher and its accuracy confirmed by the researcher present at the discussion.

Artwork produced in the course of this research was not intended to be the subject of analysis but simply to facilitate the discussions which then formed part of the text data.

Analysis was carried out using a general inductive approach to condense the extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format. This straightforward approach is frequently used in health and social science research to aid an understanding of meaning in complex data through the development of summary themes or categories from the raw data.[12]

Major themes emerged from a systematic reading and re-reading of all the transcripts and were coded manually, by school (indicative of region), year level (indicative of age) and participant's name (to indicate gender and ensure that verbatim comments used later in the report could come from a variety of individuals). A low-inference approach was adopted by making extensive use of direct quotes during the coding.

Additional demographic information was taken from consent form summaries provided by schools in a format requested by the researchers.

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[12] Miles M B & Huberman A M (1994) Qualitative data analysis (2nd ed) London: Sage.
Pope C, Ziebland S & Mays N (2000) Qualitative research in health care: analyzing qualitative data, *British Medical Journal*, 320, 114–116.

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Some transcripts were re-read more than once and a sub-sample was read by a different researcher to validate identification of themes and contribute to the analysis and findings.

Direct quotes have been used extensively throughout the section on findings consistent with the intention to present the views of children and young people in their own voices and minimise, to the greatest extent possible, adult interpretations.

Quantitative research

Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (a computer program for statistical analysis) to derive frequency of responses by sub-groups of respondents. The information was presented graphically and in tabular form.

Considerations in interpreting the data

In interpreting the data, it is important to be mindful of the following considerations:

- While the research represents a broad spectrum of children and young people (including Indigenous children and young people and those from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds such as children in care, and children with disabilities and health concerns), the representation from lower socio-economic groups in the qualitative component of the research was lower than that planned by the researchers. Where there is a requirement for all participants to obtain parental/guardian consent for involvement, it is a challenge to access harder-to-reach children and young people.

- The research was limited to children and young people aged 5–18 years inclusive and does not, therefore, reflect the views of children aged under five.

- More girls than boys participated in the qualitative research (167 boys versus 210 girls). Girls returned consent forms in larger numbers than boys. This tendency became evident early on in the research and attempts were made to equalise the numbers by giving more consent forms to boys than to girls. Despite this, the number of girls remained higher. This was, however, countered by the online survey in which more boys than girls participated (318 boys, 255 girls, 9 unknown). Ultimately, the total number of boys and girls participating in the research was very similar (51% boys versus 49% girls).

- A larger number of young people than children participated in the qualitative research (132 aged 5–12, versus 245 aged 13–18). In view of the intensive nature of the research strategies for younger students, this age distribution was understood from the outset.

- While the project team utilised a range of more innovative research strategies, providing multiple data sources, the researchers are not able to offer compelling evidence of the validity of these individual strategies, other than that the data from the various sources have a high degree of consistency.

- The online survey was intended for children and young people aged 10-17 years living in Western Australia. The survey deliberately targeted children aged 10 and above due to the need for participants to be technically competent and to provide passive consent to participate. Although care was taken to promote the survey only through organisations such as schools and non-government organisations working directly with this target group, this was an anonymous survey and it was therefore not possible to verify the demographics of the survey respondents.

- Relatively few 17-year-olds were able to participate in the research. Most 17-year-olds were preparing for their TEE (Tertiary Entrance Examinations) when the research activities were conducted. A few 18-year-olds, who were completing their last year of secondary school, were included in the qualitative research.

- For the qualitative research, children and young people were interviewed mainly in groups, rather than individually. They may therefore have been less inclined to speak of sensitive or deeply personal matters (e.g. sexuality, abuse). This was countered to some extent by the inclusion in the research of the online survey, which was completed independently and anonymously.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose

A literature review formed Stage 1 of the research and was conducted early in the project. The primary purpose of the review was to locate and review Australian and international literature on child and youth wellbeing, in particular those studies based on direct input from children and young people. The aim was to identify the extent and scope of work previously undertaken and to inform the qualitative and quantitative components of the research.

A brief summary of the findings of the literature search is provided below. A full copy of the literature review is provided at Attachment 5.

Summary of findings

Seeking information directly from children and young people about their wellbeing is increasingly common in research conducted not only by academics but also governments and non-government organisations. It was evident that questionnaires and interviews continue to be the methodology of choice for researchers working with children and young people. The literature, however, suggested that these "tried and true" methods be supplemented by other task-based activities that engage the interest of children and young people.

A number of options were explored. These included:

- Draw and tell activities for younger children
- Photographic activities
- The use of technology through online surveys and use of message boards
- Use of scripts to assist children in the completion of questionnaires
- Drawing on or writing post cards
- Role plays in focus groups
- Open Space Technology for larger groups[13]
- Maps and neighbourhood tours
- Recording thoughts in diaries
- Using toys and telephones as a way of encouraging children to open up.

The findings of the literature search informed the selection of research activities for the project. A photographic activity was selected, along with an online survey and draw and tell activities. In addition, elements of Open Space Technology were adopted for the interactive forum held for young people in Perth.

The literature review also provided useful information on how to design activities in a way that optimised the usefulness of the information received. For example, the research suggested that draw and tell activities should be kept simple in order to avoid young children feeling inadequate about their skill level and drawing only those things that they could draw (as opposed to those things that reflected what they really felt). The researchers therefore ensured that the mural activity and artwork and storytelling sessions required only simple drawings (e.g. a happy or sad face) and focused on the discussion of the thoughts and feelings behind the drawings, rather than on the drawings themselves.

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[13] Open Space Technology is a technique for managing large meetings where the subject matter is complex and open for discussion (i.e. where the participants can create an agenda for themselves). It is characterised by self-organisation and free movement between discussion groups.

Chapter 3: What We Did

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGIES

The qualitative component was the focus of the project and incorporated several research strategies:

- artwork and storytelling
- focus groups and interviews
- an interactive forum (including Open Space Technology style discussions, mini-surveys, and the creation of banners and a DVD)
- mural painting and storytelling
- a small, hard copy survey
- a photographic activity ("A Picture's Worth A Thousand Words").

A brief outline of each activity and how it was conducted is provided below. Findings from all the qualitative activities are documented in Chapter 4, and a selection of the artworks and photographs produced by the children and young people is reproduced throughout this report.

Demographic Profile of the Qualitative Research Participants

RESEARCH STRATEGY	TOTAL	GENDER	AGE OR YEAR GROUP	LOCATION	SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
Focus groups and interviews	229	99 boys 130 girls	8–18 years	Perth, Wheatbelt town, South-West regional centre, Kimberley regional centre, Kimberley town, and four remote locations	Children and young people from high and low socio-economic groups, city/regional and remote locations, and the following specific groups: • Indigenous (46) • Disabilities (10) • Chronic health problems (6) • Children in care (11) • Children caring for parents or siblings (7) • Geographically isolated young people who access school online (7)
Artwork and storytelling	33	12 boys 21 girls	5–8 years	Perth, Wheatbelt town, Kimberley regional centre	10 Indigenous children, 1 child with learning difficulties, and 1 child who was deaf
Mural painting	15	8 boys 7 girls	6–12 years	Perth	Recently arrived migrants for whom English is a second language
Interactive forum	40	21 boys 19 girls	14–17 years	Perth	"Middle Australia" One young person in care
Hard copy survey	21	9 boys 12 girls	14–16 years	South-West town	Some had learning difficulties. All faced limited employment opportunities due to location
Small groups/interviews (at South-West VET-Link Forum)	21	11 boys 10 girls	15–18 years*	South-West regional centre	Young people with learning difficulties
Photographic activity ("A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words")	18	7 boys 11 girls	15–16 years	Perth	Young people from high socio-economic area
TOTAL	377	167 boys 210 girls	44 aged 5–8; 88 aged 8–12; 245 aged 13–18	N/A	N/A

* Because the forum catered for students in Year 10-12 with learning difficulties, three of the Year 12s had repeated a year and were aged 18, rather than 17.

Focus groups

There were 39 focus groups conducted, involving a total of 229 children and young people aged 8–18 years. Focus groups were semi-structured and used a discussion guide with prompts to encourage discussion. All the themes and topics were raised by the participants themselves and therefore reflected their interests and concerns. The discussion guides used for the focus groups are provided at Attachment 4.

Focus groups were chosen as a research strategy because of their high validity and ease of administration. In addition, interviewing in groups, rather than individually, increases the participants' safety and comfort with the strategy and therefore increases participation rates. High participation rates were important in this study as the Commissioner wanted to establish the views of a large number of children and young people from a wide range of ages, backgrounds and locations.

The focus groups were run by individual researchers and conducted between September and December 2009. The groups were held in:

- the Perth metropolitan area
- a Wheatbelt town
- a South-West regional centre
- a Kimberley regional centre
- a Kimberley town.

In addition, two groups were held with young people from four remote locations who were being educated using virtual classroom technology (online conferencing). This entailed speaking to the researcher through a teacher and the sessions were therefore more question and answer than free-flowing discussion. The questions covered similar ground, however, to that of the focus groups.

Focus groups with children were scheduled to last 30 minutes and those with young people to last one hour. The actual length of the sessions varied from approximately 25 minutes to 70 minutes, depending on the number of participants, their preparedness to talk, and the time available.

Some were fluent and confident speakers. Others were shy, speaking in short sentences or phrases. Nonetheless, their meaning was clear. Some Indigenous children and young people in the Kimberley used Kriol and English when speaking with the researchers.[14] Transcription was made possible because the researchers summarised or fed-back the comments to the participants in English. A small number of children who attended focus groups were hearing-impaired and spoke through an interpreter.

The focus groups proved relatively simple to organise and administer. In addition, the researchers found that the information elicited through the discussion groups was valuable and relevant, and that children and young people enjoyed the experience. Indeed, many took the time to thank the researchers for listening to them.

The sheer number of focus groups conducted provides a high level of validation and confirmation of the key issues and perceptions of the children and young people involved.

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[14] Kriol is an acknowledged language in the Kimberley and children learn English and at least one traditional language at school. Some speak two or three traditional languages at home.

Artwork and storytelling

Artwork and storytelling were used to engage children aged 5-8 years. A total of 33 children participated in six artwork and storytelling sessions.

The children were asked to draw a picture of themselves when they were feeling happy or sad. They were then asked to explain through story the meaning behind their drawings. The discussion guides used for these activities are provided at Attachment 4.

This approach was chosen for younger children because it mirrors many of the activities they undertake in school and they feel comfortable with it. In addition, the subject of wellbeing, with its obvious dimensions of happiness/sadness, lends itself to very simple artwork. Drawing a happy or sad face is something most children are quite capable of doing. This sense of competence and confidence increased the likelihood of children sharing their ideas with the researchers.

Nearly all the 5–7-year-olds, and a few 8-year-olds, participated in the artwork/storytelling groups. The artwork groups were run by individual researchers and conducted in schools between September and November 2009. Like the focus groups, the approach proved to be relatively simple to organise and administer. The researchers found that the volume and quality of the data generated through discussion of the artwork groups varied depending on the capacity of the individual child. While most children were engaged and communicative (often demonstrating a high level of insight), others struggled to express their thoughts and occasionally got stuck on a single thought. In terms of enjoyment, most children seemed very happy to participate in the activity.

Making a mural

A mural activity was conducted in October 2009 with 15 boys and girls aged 6–12 years who attended an intensive English centre attached to a primary school in suburban Perth. The children were all refugees who had been in Australia for approximately one year. While English was not their first language, they could all understand and be understood in basic English and interpreters were not required.

The activity was coordinated by three researchers and a volunteer art adviser. It took place at the school and began with small group discussions about the things that made children feel happy or sad and the things they liked doing. All 15 children then came back together around a large art table where they were given a piece of calico and invited to paint or draw their faces. They were asked to draw however they felt at that time – e.g. happy, sad, tired, angry. The children completed their paintings in 30–45 minutes. As they finished, they were invited to talk to the researchers and explain the emotion behind their face paintings and to talk about what children need to live a good life. The discussion guides used by the researchers for this activity are provided at Attachment 4.

In total, the activity lasted 1 hour 35 minutes. After the activity was completed, the 15 face paintings were sewn together to create a mural which the Commissioner for Children and Young People presented to the school at an assembly about one month later.

The mural activity was chosen for these particular children for two reasons: because they had limited English language skills and it was thought that they may enjoy producing an artwork together. Both assumptions proved true. The children were engaged by the activity and extremely proud of their work. The information gleaned from the activity, however, was probably no different than that which could have been obtained through simpler research strategies (e.g. artwork/storytelling/group discussions). The mural activity also required considerable administrative and artistic effort from the researchers and volunteer helpers. Fortunately, the quality of the children's artwork and the pleasure they derived from the mural was worth the investment.

Photography – "A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words"

This activity involved providing disposable cameras to 21 15–16-year-olds from a senior high school in a high socio-economic area of Perth. The cameras each had 27 exposures. The participants were provided with a verbal briefing, followed by written confirmation of the activity and its purpose.

Over a period of four days, the boys and girls were asked to take photographs of things, people, places, activities or events that:

* were important or special to them
* enabled them to live their lives to the full
* concerned them
* stopped them feeling good or got in the way of them living their lives to the full.

Nineteen of the 21 students who were given cameras took photographs and returned the cameras. Some of the participants planned their approach to the project, deciding to take a series of shots concerning a theme. Others mixed it up a little and took shots about things they felt needed to change and things that made them happy. Most did not do much planning, other than to include a range of people and situations that made them feel good or issues they felt strongly about. A few were conscious of having a finite number of exposures and wanting to use them well. These participants said that they gave a lot of thought to what they photographed. Using a film rather than digital camera was a novelty and some enjoyed this aspect. As one participant commented *'it was nice just carrying around a disposable camera and having to frame your shots and not be able to look at them afterwards – you couldn't be complacent when you took them'.*

After the participants returned the cameras, the researchers arranged for the photographs to be developed. They then returned to the school to interview the young people about the meaning behind their photographs. Of the 19 boys and girls who returned their cameras, 18 made themselves available for interview.

Interviews were carried out either individually or in pairs and each lasted 15–20 minutes. Most took place in December 2009, but some participants were unavailable then and their interviews took place in March 2010. These were conducted at the school by individual researchers.

At the interviews, participants were shown their photographs and given time to look through them. They were then asked to select about six photographs that held the greatest meaning for them and to discuss these with the researcher. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked if there were any things they would have liked to take photos of but had been unable to capture. Finally, they were asked to make any general comments about what they felt contributes to children and young people feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full. They were then given a complete set of their photographs to keep. The researchers retained a second set.

The photographic activity was selected for the research because of evidence contained in the literature search that such techniques are popular with children and young people and easy for them to accurately depict their thoughts. This proved true for the 18 young people involved. Without exception, they were extremely positive about the activity and most thanked the researchers for the opportunity to participate. Moreover, from the researchers' perspective, the information obtained was rich and insightful.

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Interactive forum

An interactive forum was held in Perth in November 2009. It ran for roughly 3.5 hours and was attended by 21 boys and 19 girls, aged between 14 and 17 years. The forum was for young people whose interests or organisations had not been specifically targeted in the research and who represented "middle Australia". The young people came from a surf life-saving club, a private girls' school, a government senior high school from a mid-range socio-economic area, the Youth Advisory Council and a football club.

During the forum, participants were asked to do a variety of activities to elicit their thoughts and ideas on aspects of wellbeing. The activities included group discussions, voting sessions, mini-surveys, and the creation of banners and a DVD.

Shortly after arriving, the participants were divided into six groups, each with a facilitator. They were asked "What really matters to young people and why?" The facilitators recorded the responses on butchers' paper. At the end of the session, the organisers compiled a list of all the things the participants had identified as important. All the participants were then given three stickers – 1st, 2nd and 3rd – and were asked to vote on the three things that were most important to them (in priority order). The researchers then identified the three things with the most votes. The participants were asked to choose one of those themes and, in their groups, address the following two questions:

1. Are there barriers that stop you having the thing that you've identified as being most important to you?
2. What can young people do to make sure that whatever matters to them actually happens or that it is promoted and that they can enjoy more of it? And what can adults, organisations and governments do to help young people have more of the things that matter to them?

At various points in the afternoon, the participants were also asked to complete three mini-surveys exploring various topics such as:

* What makes you feel appreciated?
* Who do you admire?
* Do you have enough say in decisions that affect you?
* Do people take your views seriously?
* What concerns do you have?
* What's good about your life?
* What would you like to change?
* What do children[15] need to live a full life?
* Has peer pressure or bullying been an issue for you?

The topics were selected on the basis of early findings from the focus groups. The forum provided an opportunity for some of these to be explored in more detail.

Towards the end of the day, the young people were given a choice of making a video or creating some banners to illustrate their views on three basic questions:

1. What really matters to us?
2. What do we need more of?
3. What do we need less of?

The video was filmed by a Year 11 Media Arts student from a government senior high school, with assistance from his Media Arts Teacher.

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[15] As with the other qualitative components, "children" meant everyone up to and including the age of 18

More information on the forum is provided at Attachment 6 parts (a), (b) and (c). The findings are summarised in Attachment 6(a), copies of the mini-surveys are provided at Attachment 6(b), and a summary of the participants' responses to the surveys is provided at Attachment 6(c).

The interactive forum was selected as a research strategy because it enabled a large number of young people to come together for several hours and to be involved in the project using a mixture of research strategies. The forum was a success; the information gathered was rich and extensive. The discussion groups and mini-surveys, in particular, elicited much valuable information. With only one or two exceptions, the participants were fully engaged in the process and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to express their views.

The two artistic activities (the banners and DVD) allowed the participants to express themselves in a different way and, again, the vast bulk of the participants were highly engaged. From a researcher's perspective, these two activities did not elicit the same rich information as the discussion groups and surveys, but they met a different purpose – to deliver a tangible and lasting product with a clear message.

South-West forum

Twenty-one boys and girls aged 15–18 years were interviewed at a youth forum organised by South-West VET-Link in September 2009. The participants were from both private and government schools in the South-West region and all were considered to be at risk of not making a successful transition from school into further education or training and/or employment.

All the participants had a disability and/or a learning difficulty. Many had communication difficulties, requiring time and encouragement to express their ideas. Others found the questions challenging, sometimes struggling to understand them and to find something of importance, to themselves, to say. They all appeared to enjoy the experience and remained engaged.

A copy of the discussion guide for the South-West forum is provided at Attachment 4.

Hard copy survey

Following the South-West forum, a further 21 boys and girls aged 14–16 years, from a South-West government high school, completed a short hard copy survey containing the same questions as the forum interviews. Only some of these young people had a learning difficulty but all faced potential difficulties associated with being from a town with limited employment prospects for school leavers.

Twelve girls and nine boys completed the survey. Nineteen of the 21 were aged 15 and the other two were 14 and 16 years old. The survey was simple to administer and elicited some interesting results. It was evident that a small number of young people had compared notes on their responses, but this was not widespread and detracted only marginally from the value of the data.

A copy of the hard copy survey is provided at Attachment 7.

Chapter 3: What We Did

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – ONLINE SURVEY

Introduction

The online survey for 10–17-year-olds was conducted over three weeks in December 2009, once the qualitative component of the research had been largely completed. The timing of the survey meant that some of the issues and themes that emerged from the qualitative research informed the survey's development.

The survey was developed in consultation with the Commissioner and the Project Reference Group and administered through the Nexus Strategic Solutions website. It required only passive (tick-the-box) consent from the respondents.

The purpose of the survey was to test and quantify the depth of feeling on key issues identified in the qualitative research and to involve a larger, broader range of children and young people who might not otherwise have participated in the research. The anonymity of online surveys may be attractive to young people, together with the fact that parental consent is not required.

The survey was pre-tested to ensure that it was easy to understand and could be completed within 15 minutes (*N.B. Details on the testing process are contained in Attachment 4*). The survey included:

- six demographic questions on each respondent,
- 35 questions on life satisfaction, happiness, safety, bullying and trust,
- three open-ended questions, and
- a general comments section.

The survey was promoted through limited channels (as opposed to being publicly promoted) to minimise the number of responses from people who were not within the intended target group. The organisations that promoted the survey were:

- Department of Education
- Catholic Education Office
- Association of Independent Schools of WA
- Department of Child Protection
- peak disability bodies.

A copy of the online survey is provided at Attachment 8(a).

Demographic profile of survey participants

There were 605 responses to the survey, but only 582 were useable.[16]

The demographic profile of survey participants is summarised below.
- The majority of respondents were boys: 318 (54.6%) boys and 255 (43.8%) girls[17]
- The most common respondents were 13 or 14 years old: ages ranged from 10–17 years (135 respondents were 10–12 years old, 282 were 13 or 14 years old, and 155 were 15–17 years old)
- The vast majority of respondents, 451 (77.5%) were from Perth, 36 (6.2%) were from the Mid West, 29 (5%) were from Peel, 26 (4.5%) were from Goldfields–Esperance, and the rest were from other regional areas or did not specify a region
- 45 respondents (7.7%) indicated they had a disability (the most common disabilities cited being intellectual and physical)

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[16] The remaining 23 comprised 12 blanks (where respondents entered the survey but did not answer any questions), 8 duplicates (where respondents completed the survey twice), and 3 who answered only the demographic questions.

[17] The remaining 1.6% of respondents did not respond to the question on gender.

- 37 respondents (6.4%) identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 25 respondents (4.3%) were in foster care.

Notably, the response rate for boys was higher than for girls (318 boys and 255 girls). This is the reverse of the situation for the qualitative research where the number of girls was higher than that of boys. This suggests that while boys may be reluctant to read the paperwork and complete the consent forms associated with qualitative research, they are nonetheless interested in being heard. Online surveys appear to be an effective way of capturing boys' views.

There was a relatively low response from country locations. Despite contact being made with country schools, 77.5% of respondents were from Perth. To a large extent, however, this reflects the population distribution within Western Australia, where only 16.1% of Western Australians live in outer regional and remote locations[18] . The percentage of Indigenous survey respondents (6.4%) was slightly higher than the percentage of Indigenous people in WA aged under 18 (5%).[19]

Data analysis

The survey data was analysed by a PhD student under the direction of team member Professor Janet Fletcher. The responses to all questions were calculated and some cross-tabulations were undertaken to assess the views of participants based on age, location (city/country), Indigenous status, and gender.

Value of the survey

The online survey was considered a valuable component of the research for four reasons:

1. The survey enabled the research to reach and involve a large number and wide range of children and young people.
2. It attracted a higher number of boys than girls, off-setting the proportions from the qualitative research, where more girls than boys participated.
3. It revealed some interesting findings and provided some statistics for reporting purposes that could not have been derived from qualitative research.
4. The results confirmed some of the findings from the qualitative research.

[18] Australian Bureau of Statistics *Australian Social Trends 2008*
[19] ABS statistics for WA, as of 25th June 2009

Chapter 4: What We Found

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

For the children and young people who participated in this research, the most important contributors to their wellbeing were:

- A loving, supportive family
- Good friends
- Fun and activity
- Being safe
- A good education
- The basics
- Being acknowledged
- Freedom and independence.

During the focus groups and other qualitative research strategies, these eight aspects of wellbeing were constantly identified as the things that enabled children and young people to feel good and live their lives to the full.[20] The comments of the children and young people reflected the high value they placed on these aspects, over and above other considerations.

The eight aspects overlap to some extent and some information in this chapter has been repeated in different sections.

In addition to exploring the above eight aspects of wellbeing, this chapter discusses other important findings that emerged from the research. These include:

- things they identified as barriers to achieving wellbeing (in particular, stress)
- the high level of concern they displayed for others
- their hopes for the future
- their perceptions of their capacity to influence life events
- the people they most admire (role models)
- some ideas on making life better for children and young people.

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[20] Children and young people were not asked to identify a specific number of things that contributed to their wellbeing. Rather, they were asked open-ended questions (detailed in Attachment 4) that allowed them to identify what mattered most to them. Their responses were collated, analysed and categorised by the researchers, with the most common and highly valued aspects of wellbeing being reported.

In reporting the findings, participants aged 5–12 years are referred to as children and those aged 13–18 years as young people. Children and young people are identified only by gender and age. Names have been used only where children's artwork has been reproduced in the report and with their specific consent. Where it is relevant to an understanding of the findings, the geographical region of participants has been included (e.g. Kimberley, South-West, Wheatbelt or Perth). Similarly, where a participant's comments reflected their specific circumstances (e.g. Indigenous or non-Indigenous, living in foster care, experiencing ongoing or long-term hospitalisation) this has been noted.

There was a high degree of consistency in the findings from all of the qualitative tools, particularly of the eight aspects of wellbeing considered by children and young people to be most important to them and others of their age. Where it is relevant to an understanding of the findings, individual research strategies or participant groups have been identified.

The majority of the research was conducted through focus groups using discussion guides that ensured children and young people could raise issues of importance to them without having to respond to adults' views. Discussion guides used for the intensive English centre, geographically isolated young people and the South-West forum covered similar ground to that of the focus groups.

Because of the young age of the participants, artwork and storytelling discussions focused on two questions: what made them feel happy, and what made them feel sad.

While the early part of the Perth interactive forum was designed to allow participants to identify their own priorities for discussion, three mini-questionnaires were used, posing questions on topics for which the researchers wanted to gain additional, in-depth information. The findings are reported in such a way as to make this difference clear.

This report makes extensive use of direct quotes (indicated by italics within single quote marks). Much of the interpretive commentary also uses the children's and young people's own words, although this is not always indicated. Where several direct quotes have been used under the same heading, these will normally have been selected from different groups and from different individuals unless otherwise indicated.

A LOVING, SUPPORTIVE FAMILY

Relationships with parents, brothers, sisters and grandparents, and the ways in which these affect feelings and experiences in everyday life, were a recurring theme across all age groups. With Indigenous children and young people this included relationships with their extended families and Elders.

The love, care and support of family was accepted as normal by some and envied by others but was always considered important. An 8-year-old girl described a good family as one *'where you be loved and you have a nice bed'*. According to her, everyone should *'have a pet and a good family and not be poor'*. A 9-year-old said *'a loving, caring family is what everyone needs'*.

Having a loving and caring family meant: *'family that will listen to you'*, having *'someone to support you at home'*, and *'support from your parents, for them to be actually interested in you'*. It was said that everyone needs:

- *'a sound family life with no complexities… and you need unconditional love because it screws you up if you don't have it… and a nice, sound relationship where there's no* [parents] *fighting'*, girl 16
- *'a solid family,… parents that are together, that most of the time get along… to have normal conversations with, people* [who] *are not going to judge me and I can pretty much tell them anything…and supportive parents'*, girl 17

'... *they're all my family in the photo...*
it's like the circle of family...
everybody's in a circle and together,
warming their hands over the fire...
I value family because you can relate to
them and it's one of the main instances
where you can be friends with someone
20 years older than you and still
have a relationship', girl 16

Many young people appreciated their families:

* '*I have a really good home environment... and we have such a good relationship*
  with each other that there's no effort involved... it's just a relaxing relationship....
  I want to get out... to burn up that energy, sort of thing..., but I can come home again
  and feel completely safe, and feel loved..., feel that unconditional love', girl 17
* '*getting away from friends and being with family is good –*
  you fight with friends and feel left out', girl 13
* '*family things* [are important because they give you] *good memories,*
  role models, a safe home...and support', girl 15

Family was the most popular theme for the young people taking part in the photo activity ("A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words"), most of whom took shots of family members or things that symbolised the closeness of family, such as feeling safe with and loved by grandparents:

* '*I grew up with my grandmother for quite a bit through my childhood and always used to go in the garden with her.*
  She used to grow big, red roses and this reminds me of fun times I had when I was younger', boy 16

'*My whole family is very instrumental*
so that's what this picture is about, or represents.
It's my piano... I had a music scholarship at my
last school but I'm not studying it now.
It's family and that makes me happy', girl 16

Children and young people loved doing things with family:

- *'I go fishing with my dad and mum and Daisy and I caught a flatfish once and my dad caught a blowie once. Last week we catched lots of herring and then we eat all the herring for dinner'*, boy 5
- *'I feel happy when I get to go to the pool with mum'*, boy 7
- *'when I play with my cousin we're happy – we have something to eat and play make-up'*, girl 6
- *'It's fun going out to dinners with my family and just being around all of my family, it's really nice'*, girl 9
- *'we won our first cricket match two weeks ago… my dad* [was there]*'*, boy 11
- [a good day would be] *'winning a grand final for football… at Subiaco Oval* [I'd be with] *my dad and my mum and my two sisters and my mum's sister and her kids'*, boy 8
- *'sometimes hanging with friends is really good but, like, we had a family reunion the other day and that was excellent. I love my family… my grandfather passed away recently so that's what sparked this big reunion. It was great because I now know everyone on my dad's side, and that made me feel good because they're not empty faces'*, girl 14
- *'my grandma taught me how to sew and now I might be able to sew her a dress and she can help me'*, girl 10

'This is my birthday and I have four presents and am very happy because I've got presents and I'm turning seven... I've got purple ribbon and black ribbon around it. I've got a big present and a small present'.

This girl said she hopes one of the presents is a camera and if it is she'll take photos of her presents and herself when she's on holidays with her family.

'Up here it says it's my birthday', girl 6

Indigenous children and young people were very involved with their families and almost everything they loved was done in the company of family:

- *'fishing and camping at the old bridge'*, girl 10
- *'living on the beach and going on a boat at One Arm Point'*, girl 7
- *'swimming, fishing, hunting, goanna shooting'*, boy 14
- *'I have a good time playing backyard cricket with my dad and big brothers and cousins and all that'*, boy 16

Family problems

When children and young people spoke of *'family problems'* or *'family stress'* this usually meant parents fighting. It was a topic raised across the qualitative research (e.g. South-West forum, photo activity, geographically isolated young people and in a lot of discussion groups) and was said to be a big issue for many:
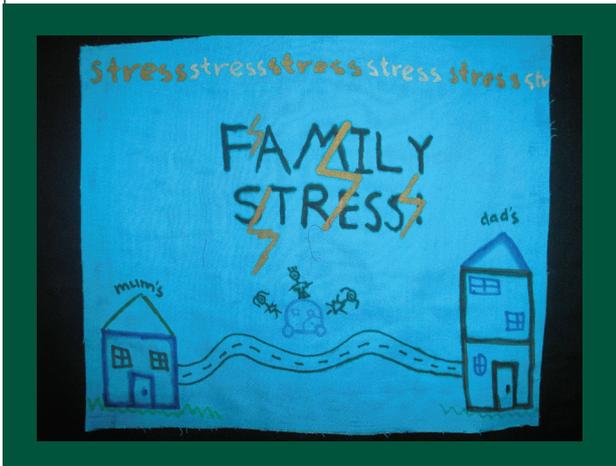
- *'I reckon some kids I know don't like going home because of the family problems there… that's why they enjoy school is because they get away… there's bad situations like family separate and things like that'*, boy 13
- *'a lot of your friends get down because their families are having issues. It just brings them down. It brings you down. It brings everyone else down'*, girl 15
- *'school gets you away from home life, you can be someone else… the home life still does tear you down mentally… like, some days, it's just, you wonder why you bother'*, boy 15
- *'Well, I find that… mum's voice, she just sometimes – it just gets on my nerves and I just want to get away. I normally go to my friend's house or I just get dad to come and pick me up'*, girl 14

Children and young people did not like family conflict:

- *'we* [kids] *don't like it when our family fights, especially when your mum and dad do because when your dad or your mum goes away you don't see them for much, only on weekends and that'*, girl 10
- *'sometimes my dad goes just a little overboard. It's only when he's drinking a lot and he starts yelling at me and I feel really bad'*, girl 15
- *'I'm kind of sitting there thinking, is it my responsibility to do something here? Am I supposed to stop them from fighting? I have no one to talk to about it. I might be upset and I'm just kind of sitting there'*, girl 17
- *'there needs to be a certain amount of time where the kid's away from the parents so that,* [parents can get rid of their frustration] *so they're happy when their kids are there and they, you know, they're not angry or something like that because that's not really the thing you want to be experiencing when you're a child'*, boy 15

In this research, Indigenous children and young people invariably raised the subject of parents fighting, usually associated with alcohol. It was a major issue and seemed to affect all of them, directly or indirectly. Some spoke of feeling sad and scared and referred to drunk people who messed up the house and left them to clean it up. They talked about parents in general and did not criticise or comment on their own parents in the way that non-Indigenous participants did. Many talked about respecting Elders and looking after family.

Parents

Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people had a lot to say about the importance of parents and how much they were needed:

- *'I think that with kids, parents are the most important thing. Like, they could have a perfect life outside of home. They could have everything they could possibly have outside of home, and because the parents aren't, you know, they're either not there or they're, like they don't care… I think that kid would still turn out, you know, not to be quite normal, or you know… unsatisfied with their life'*, boy 15
- *'Good parents are what every kid needs'*, boy 16

It was said that good parents:

- *'help you through tough times, so you don't get hurt'*, girl 10
- *'talk to children to help them understand, not shout at them'*, boy 12
- *'[are]… loving parents, as simple as that'*, boy 13
- *'care for [kids]… don't drink or smoke'*, boy 10

Some children considered there were a lot of good parents:

- *'a lot of people don't have good parents but a lot do'*, girl 10
- *'a lot of people care about their children they grow up'*, girl 10

Many young people appreciated and admired their parents, citing reasons such as they *'find time for me'*, *'care about me'*, or *'support me'*. Others were more detailed:

- *'my parents are pretty fair, they follow a nice set of rules. They're not really hypocrites. I like that about them. They sort of see things from my point of view'*, boy 15
- *'[mum] has always looked out for me. She has forked out money for me, she's always tried to keep me motivated with my sports… she'd always give me a reason not to quit even though she's paying for it… she keeps everything going, not to mention she feeds me'*, boy 16
- *'me and my father are best friends'*, boy 13
- *'I like my mum's characteristics, she's really, really smart and if there's ever anything wrong she'll look after you… she can cook really well… she's really pretty and she's just really kind and she puts up with so much'*, girl 15
- *'I look up to my dad and uncle – the good and the bad. Even when he does some thing bad he tells me… but he expects me to learn from it and be better than him… and I like that'*, boy 15
- *'that's one major thing, is that you always need someone to support you so that they can be there to encourage you when you make mistakes and things like that. It's like your parents are there to help you learn from what your mistakes would be and then how to make them better'*, boy 13

Half of the young people who took part in the photo activity chose to take photographs of their parents or brothers because they loved and admired them.

Some young people said they talked to their parents about problems and could tell them anything. Others said their parents were so stressed from working all day they didn't have time to talk and some young people ended up feeling frustrated when they just wanted to vent and parents insisted on giving advice or just didn't listen:

- *'my dad says, "oh yeah, if you have any problems talk to me" – but you can't talk to him because he has no useful information… he's so judgemental as well'*, girl 15
- *'they can never really understand you, they never get your point – I confide in my best friends because they know me really well and they know how I feel about stuff – but I don't think there will be anyone ever who knows you so well that they can ever really understand exactly how you feel unless you put it into words. We kind of expect people to understand how we mean, but…'*, girl 15

Young people said they wanted to be able to talk to their parents without them getting angry:

- *'because I don't think anyone ever learns from anyone from just yelling at them… you never really take it in when someone's screaming at you… you kind of find it better when they sit down and talk with you about what you've done wrong and how you can fix that up, instead of being stern and angry with you'*, boy 13
- *'When you have a parent shouting at you, telling you something, that is not helping. Children shut down, I even find when mum shouts at us, we shut down immediately, we don't do anything and we shut down, we walk away'*, girl 17

In one group, however, several girls admitted taking their frustration or anger out on their parents:

- *'I flip out, like screaming at mum and walk out of the room and feel incredibly bad… but don't know how to fix it'*, girl 14
- *'I can't flip out at mum because she just loses it… so I do it to dad… and feel guilty later'*, girl 14
- *'family are just there, so if I get angry at home I explode but at school I hold it in'*, girl 14

Children who did not see their dads very much (because parents had separated or fathers went away for work) missed them and loved being with them, doing anything at all.   For example, a 9-year-old boy said *'going to the shops with my dad'* made him very happy and a 10-year-old boy said he liked just seeing his dad, one night a week or on weekends, even if they didn't do much together.

A number of young people had parents who were separated. Some moved easily between two households or said they felt OK about their parents' divorce but others spoke of fathers who were like strangers or *'more like an uncle, really'* and a few were unhappy about their family arrangements (e.g. living with mum and her boyfriend).   One child was upset at hearing she was getting a new dad:

- *'there's a boy and he always says that he's going to marry my mum… then he said that he's going to be my dad and I've already got one'*, girl 7

Parents' expectations

'You don't want to disappoint your parents' was a very common view among young people. Some understood that what they experienced as pressure was their parents wanting them do better than they themselves did while others were worried about disappointing their parents:

- *'I think I worry most about what my mum thinks of my marks'*, girl 15
- *'I would like to change the amount of pressure you have from your parents – like if you failed a test and if you felt bad about it you're more worried about what your parents are going to say. Things like exams – you're more worried about the score you get not just for yourself but because if you don't get a good enough score they'll be disappointed in you'*, girl 15
- *'your parents expect so much of you'*, girl 15

Some felt that they owed it to their parents to become more independent and take on responsibilities at home, such as making a meal once a week. Others agreed but felt so pressured by schoolwork they were not sure how to handle it all:

- *'Part of growing up is getting used to doing stuff around the house.   It's not a free ride, you have responsibilities… it's annoying that I know we should be growing up at this age and getting life experiences but there's so much pressure from school'*, boy 16

Parents' responsibilities

It was frequently said during this research that young people who behaved badly had parents who didn't care about them:

- *'most of their parents don't care. They just let them run around and do what they want. They have no control over their kids because they just don't care'*, girl 15

Sometimes this was thought to be the result of parents splitting up and hating each other. Each parent wanted to seem better than the other, resulting in neither taking control of the children.

Some young people were concerned about parents who were working too hard and were not there to look after kids:

- *'the government shouldn't send single mothers to work, you can't leave kids alone',* girl 16

Brothers and sisters

Young people readily discussed the enjoyment they received from playing with their little brothers and sisters. Those with brothers and sisters appreciated them:

- *'… it is good to have family members to come home to that aren't your parents. Sounds a bit weird but sometimes, I think as you become a teenager, you kind of don't want your parents around because they just annoy you – but I think that's most teenagers. But, I mean, I love my parents and all and I like having them around but it's good to have a family member, like a brother and a sister, to come home to',* girl 14
- *'I mean, like, if you're younger and you have an older sibling and they argue with you – because it's usually the younger one that looks up to the older one, like idolises them – if you have an argument with them you feel like, oh no, I've let them down',* girl 14
- *'there's pretty much nothing bad that I can say about* [my brother]*… If he does do something that upsets me then he immediately comes out and gives me a hug and says "I'm sorry I didn't mean to do that. I didn't mean to get so angry with you". He's just always nice to me',* girl 15

Some 5–10-year-olds described a very physical relationship with brothers and sisters and there was a lot of comment from younger children about being punched, kicked and hit:

- *'my brothers always hit me and punch me in the tummy and mum thought it was* [my fault] *and now I'm grounded',* girl 6
- *'I'm angry when my sisters hit me because they think I annoy them',* girl 6
- *'fighting with your brother…sometimes it just upsets you… they might hurt you, especially if* [they're] *older',* girl 10

Children often described their brothers and sisters as *'annoying'*:

- *'I don't like when me and my brother are playing a game and my big brothers are annoying us',* boy 9

Some children reported that other annoying things were brothers or sisters who cheat in games, steal toys, get you into trouble, get you blamed when it's not your fault, and get special treats:

- *'my sister always makes me get in trouble, then she makes me get banned and I get her banned',* boy 7
- *'*[I feel]* a little bit sad and lots angry when my brothers get an ice-cream and I don't. Our dad, he is the boss, so he gets to stay up and have all yummy sweets and we have to go to bed',* girl 6

Losing family

Children and young people of all ages talked about feeling upset or sad when parents, grandparents or other family passed away. In a Wheatbelt town, both non-Indigenous and Indigenous children and young people had lost young family members or friends in car accidents. This caused some of the young people to worry about the possibility of their own death:

- *'one of my aunties died in a car accident and her baby died with her... well, they should have lived, she was only 30, and you just wonder. Then you just get all stressed',* girl 14

Chapter 4: What We Found

A major difference between non-Indigenous and Indigenous children and young people was that the latter had suffered repeated losses and many were frightened about losing more relatives in the future. They frequently spoke about losing family:

- *'half of my family have passed away and we had to go, last week, my mum had to go to a funeral for her aunty and before that, a week ago, we had to go to a funeral for my aunty',* boy 10

When there was a funeral on, children described themselves as *'feeing sad', 'upset and unsafe',* and *'not feeling well'.*

Indigenous children also described feelings of loss, worry and upset when a relative was sent to prison saying that he [the relative] would be upset and crying and would miss his family.

In two groups conducted in the Kimberley, Indigenous children and young people referred to family or friends who had committed suicide. One boy apparently knew what to do if a friend talked about killing himself:

- *'if your friend is saying "I'm going to hang myself", you say "just go over and sit down and talk to your family or the police"',* boy 12

Several children mentioned using their 'network' and it appeared that they and this 12-year-old boy may have attended a protective behaviours program in which they were taught to develop a HAND network[21] of trusted adults who could support and protect them if they felt unsafe.

Pets

Dogs, cats, bids and other pets were part of family life for a lot of children and young people. In the children's groups there were endless stories of fun and enjoyment playing with pets and reports (often very detailed) of pets which had gone missing, been injured or died. The names and characteristics of even pets that had long gone remained vivid and very much part of children's lives today.

- [I'm happy] *'when I get to ride my horses',* girl 6
- *'When my fish died… we buried Oscar and put Tallulah in the bin',* girl 6

About one-third of participants in the photo activity took shots of their pets.

*'She's a Shar Pei, one of the wrinkled dogs
you see on toilet paper ads.
We'd had one once before, when I was about
three and, when we had the chance to own
this one, we took her.
She makes me really happy.
I feel like I'm young again. I reckon they
were the most fun years of my life.
She reminds me of when my family was
still happy together',* boy 16

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[21] HAND network comprises two family members, two teachers and other trusted adults, such as anyone at the police station or hospital, who can be informed if someone is concerned for their safety. It is part of a protective behaviours program delivered by Safe4Kids in remote communities in Western Australia and Queensland.

*'Playing with my puppy down
by the river I'm asleep in the house,
the puppy is outside running in the bushes,
I'm too tired to play with her.
I am inside dreaming
I am playing with her.
I wake up and come out to
play with her.
She loves playing. She is brown all over,
white on the front, black ears
and nose and yellow legs.
Her name is Bella,'* boy 7
(speaking through an interpreter
because he is deaf)

What makes me happy

5–7-year-olds:

- Hearing my class singing
- Team games
- Playing with my dog
- Fish fingers
- Playing on the playground and also skipping
- Kissing mum when she comes back
- When we go fishing at night and eat lots of fish
- When I'm with my nana
- Playing games with my friends
- Playing in my bed with my PlayStation

What makes me sad

5–7-year-olds:

- When I get teased
- When my sister tries to steal my make-up
- When my brother makes a promise and breaks it
- When I get banned off my PlayStation and computer games
- I feel sad when my mum goes... crazy... she raises her voice
- When someone hurts my feelings... they say mean things to me
- When my brother always hits me
- When I trip and fall over a rock and I cry
- My dog always scratches me when I play with her
- When I have got no-one to play with at home and I am really bored

GOOD FRIENDS

Friends were a joy and a necessity for all children and young people taking part in this research. Non-Indigenous young people said friends are *'everything'*. Indigenous children and young people prized and enjoyed their friends but family was the main thing for them.

Across the groups, time spent with friends was often described by younger children as *'just playing'*, and older children and young people spoke of *'just hanging out'*. Simply being with friends was what was important, and nothing structured or organised had to happen. For young people, letting things *'just turn out'* was a crucial aspect of their relationships with friends. Getting out, away from adults, was essential as was being with friends who understood them. Many believed only friends could really understand.

- *'playing with your friends… it makes you very, very happy because you've got friends that are helping you and caring for you'*, girl 9
- *'when you hang out with friends and when everyone is happy around you, it makes you feel happy and good inside'*, girl 12
- *'you see your family all the time so it's not particularly special but don't see friends 24/7… someone you can laugh with… they know how to have fun, they know you better than anyone else… they don't judge you – they can relate to you because they are the same age, same interest – that's why you are friends'*, girl 14
- *'I reckon everyone just needs one good friend, one person that you can just tell everything'*, girl 15
- *'friends are the most important thing to have in your life'*, girl 15
- [a good day is] *'being with friends, goofing around, laughing and being silly'*, group of boys and girls age 15

'I've been with my girlfriend for two and a half years… she's always been good to me, I've always loved her. She always keeps a smile on my face, keeps me happy [we] keep each other happy. I suppose it just kind of like disguises all the bad things that happen… what I find is that relationships seem to create that bonding with each other that you ignore everything else in the world, which is why I took the photo of us holding hands… she's very special to me', boy 16

Friends are essential

There was widespread agreement that friends are the *'main people'* to talk to about problems and the more communication with friends the better:

- *'you need more time with friends because they're the ones you talk to about your problems'*, girl 12
- *'playing with my mates makes me feel confident, safe and loved'*, boy 13
- *'that's why some people have their computers on the chat sites so they can chat to their friends. Because some of them are over in different countries and different schools and you never get to talk to them'*, boy 12
- *'friends are really important because they just make everyday life what it is and when you're upset or happy they're there – they're always there'*, girl 16

A couple of boys said they felt not only deprived but upset when separated from friends:

- *'you need your friends… when I can't be with my mates it's stressful'*, boy 16

Their mood affects yours:

- *'… when everyone is happy around you it makes you feel happy and good inside…when people are stressed they take it out on everyone'*, girl 12
- *'if someone is upset we all feel it; if it's one of your friends you think, "did I do something bad?"… you feel guilt'*, girl 14
- *'if parents or friends are having a bad day you do, too'*, girl 15

Making friends

Having friends is about a lot of things, including feeling accepted and that you belong. In one group, an 11-year-old talked about how difficult she found it to make friends and another girl agreed:

- *'I'm terrible at making friends, I don't like having to make friends… I find it just like a job and I get really stressed because I think – I don't want to be mean – but what if they don't like me'*, girl 11
- *'I think what people mostly [worry] about is what other people think of them'*, girl 12

In other focus groups, in the Wheatbelt and South-West, young people talked about leaving home to complete their secondary education or to go to university. They all seemed confident about making new friends but were aware they would have to make an effort to do so and could not just hang out with people they already knew.

Making friends was difficult for the geographically isolated group and four out of the seven young people said they did not know many people.

Some young people interviewed at the South-West forum said they would like to have more friends. A 15-year-old said that he had a lot of friends he can talk to but would like them to include him more because he felt left out.

Participants in the Perth interactive forum identified friends and support networks as one of the top three things that mattered most to them (the other two being sport, exercise and fitness, and freedom and independence). Barriers to making friends and creating support networks included controlling parents; ethnicity; being in a relationship; peer pressure; having different interests; study, work or sporting commitments; location/transport issues; social status; lack of money; lack of access to, or awareness of, social networking sites; religion or language barriers; appearance; shyness; lack of self-confidence; and personality issues.

Suggestions for overcoming these barriers included creating and funding groups and clubs; providing ways to access support groups; more opportunities for youth to voice their views; re-creating the image of youth; facilitating youth involvement along-side adults and making this cheaper; and adults keeping out of young people's business. It was suggested that young people could help themselves by joining groups or making their own groups; providing ideas and supporting what government came up with; being active and communicating; and reducing social barriers.

Friends who fight

Children did not like it when their friends were not getting along:

- [a bad day] *'is when my friends are getting into fights and they're not being friends* [with each other]*'*, girl 9
- *'I've got friends that don't like some of my other friends so I can only play with some at a time and then some at another time'*, boy 10
- *'when you've got lots and lots of friends like I do and they all do not like each other, like every single one of your friends doesn't like another one of your friends, then you've got to play with one every day – it's too hard'*, girl 10
- [I hate it when] *'friends are arguing and not getting along'*, boy 12
- *'when friends fight, you feel have to take a side but don't know which… you talk to them, just try to help them get over it'*, boy 12

Fights with friends caused a lot of distress and hurt feelings. Children said this happens a lot, to everyone, and they didn't like it:

- *'I feel sad when my friends don't play with me and they say mean words about me',* girl 7
- *'my friend slapped me around the face, then I punched him',* boy 8
- *'when I try to sort out the problem they always run away',* girl 8
- *'it makes me sad because sometimes I am alone without anybody and sometimes I get very sad, very badly, when I have got no one to play with and I just sit on the chair',* girl 8
- *'kids don't really like when people have fights because someone could get involved when someone else doesn't want them to – that could be quite annoying and it can make the situation more complicated',* girl 10

Friends who were being mean made children really angry. One girl came home from school so angry she wanted to punch things and her mum and dad bought her a punching bag to use. Others said they kicked the wall or the door:

- *'sometimes, if she says mean stuff to me, when I'm at my own house I kick my door. One time I got this big, huge crack in the door… sometimes I draw pictures of my friends that I don't like anymore because they're being mean to me and then I kick them. My door can't shut because I keep kicking it',* girl 10
- *'that's what I do, I kick my door',* boy 10

Young people did not like fighting with friends. With a physical fight you *'just hurt and you don't care'* but verbal fights and arguments made them feel really upset:

- *'if friends have an argument with you… you're, like, insecure',* girl 15
- *'you stress out when your friends are saying bad things about you',* girl 15

Managing friendship groups

Working out how to get along with different social groups was described as *'political'* and difficult for people in their early teens to manage:

- *'my sister's very sporty… and she's very musical as well; for her, because she's only just hit 13, she's in this conflict between two different… groups… but she doesn't like the netball girls, and her friends are more the music friends, and so she has this clash 'cause she's got to get on with the netball girls, otherwise the game just doesn't work, but then they're always bugging her about the fact that she has other friends. Just the politics within it… I remember being in Year 8 and the whole politics… She has one really, really good friend but she hasn't really got that group thing sorted out yet, she hasn't got that group of friends. So a lot of the time, especially with young children, the problems are centred around socialising and friends, 'cause you know your family is always there, but when you want to escape from your family you've got your friends – and she doesn't have those sorts of friends yet',* girl 17

As well as having close friends, young people said it was important to be part of a bigger group at school:

- *'I don't think you have to like pick a single group just to have friends. I mean you might have to pick a group that you want to hang out at school with, perhaps because you feel more comfortable there. You feel like, you know, you can be yourself with them more than you can with another group. Perhaps because there's other people there who you don't get along so brilliantly with, or something like that, but yeah, I think it's just important to be able to form, like, the friends that you want, no matter which group they're in',* boy 15

Peer group pressure

While all the other issues discussed in this section were raised by participants, young people attending the Perth interactive forum were asked in a questionnaire if peer pressure had been a problem for them. Of the 15 (40%) who said it had been a problem, the main things they were pressured to do were: drink alcohol; look good (e.g. wear expensive clothes, make-up); do bad things; study less; go partying.

Asked what would help others cope better with peer pressure, the top four responses were: build self-confidence/esteem that would help people say "no" and make their own decisions; provide support; encouragement to accept yourself as you are; find good friends.

'Other' groups

At big high schools, young people identified groups such as *'jocks', 'hard core musos', 'potheads', 'slutbags',* and *'populars'.* During the focus groups they enjoyed poking fun at the perceived characteristics and deficiencies of these 'other' groups (i.e. not ones to which they belonged) but conceded that not all members of these groups were horrible to be around. Young people did, however, say they experienced aggravation from groups of their peers, usually when they were out-numbered:

- *'you're walking down the street and they mock you – you're like wearing jeans and T-shirt, you're not trying to stand out or anything, and they're like, "oh my god, she's so horrible, I hate her, she's so ugly", and you're like... I haven't done anything',* girl 14

With boys, the aggravation was more physical (*e.g. 'they shove you against the wall'*).

While some described the groups as *'being at war with each other',* others saw it as a form of teasing. Either way, it seemed to be an accepted, if unpleasant, part of life and was not considered a major worry:

- *'we all have our own groups… but there's not as much hostility between the groups, we're all pretty…* [easy going]*',* girl 16
- *'by the time you get to our age, you've learnt, you've met them, everyone, over time and so you've pretty much become friends with everyone. But you have better friends and they are the group you stick with',* boy 16

Some participants who had been verbally abused or physically roughed up by members of other groups demonstrated insight into their attackers, saying that often these were people who got Ds and Es at school and felt miserable about that or were copping problems at home:

- *'they just want to seem like they don't care because they're trying but they can't do it so they just give up, and they feel like no matter what they do, they're not going to succeed,'* boy 15
- *'some people are affected by something that goes on at home… like, physical or mental abuse, you know, like they feel insecure about themselves where they treat other people like that',* girl 15

Young people living in the Wheatbelt said they didn't have much choice about who they hung out with. There were only two groups, so they *'just let things go'* and got along with each other.

Needing to be alone

For some young people, being by themselves was relaxing and enjoyable. They talked about doing what they wanted and the fact that having no time to be alone could be stressful. It didn't much matter where they were, as long as they were alone:

- *'I like my friends but I like being away from them, too',* girl 15
- *'a good day for me is being at home by myself and doing my own thing, like seriously… 'cause sometimes people piss me off… sometimes I have a good day with my friends but other times I'm like – screw you all… a good day is where I can do my own thing, sleep in and cook food and just be at home and mellow out',* girl 17

Some talked about this as needing to escape. Five participants in the photo project took shots of their rooms, the beach or some other place to which they liked escaping.

*'This is my room with my posters, one is of a skull…
I like things that are scary because it's cool…
being scared makes me feel good.'*

This 17 year old liked going to high places that
made him afraid because it made him really excited.
He got this idea from a week on the "Leeuwin" when he
climbed the main mast:

*'I saw the view from that high place and thought
how beautiful life is',* boy 17
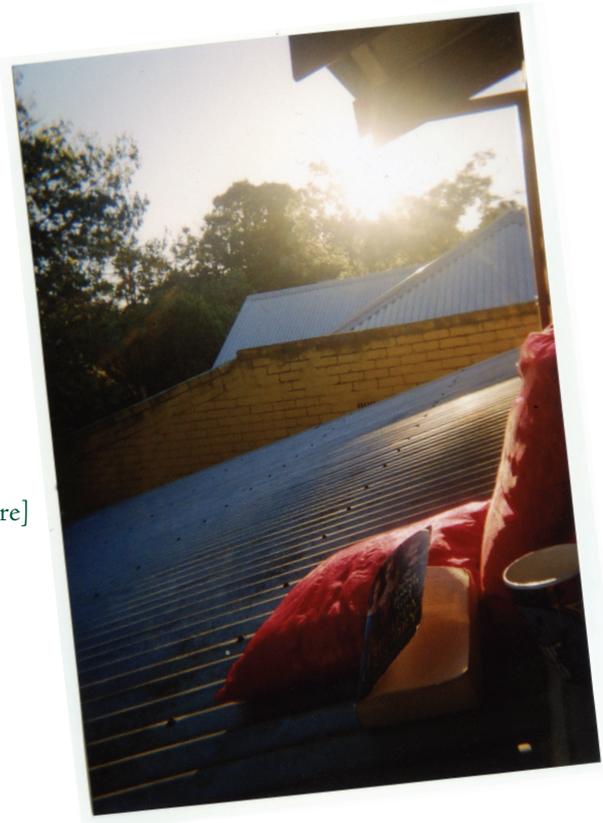
*'I crawl out of my window on to my roof.
Then you can just be alone and quiet and read where
nobody can bother you… it's just a place that I can go [where]
I can be alone and it's all quiet and there's nobody.
There are cushions to make me comfy and my cup
of tea to calm me and my book so I can get
lost in something',* girl 16

FUN AND ACTIVITY

Children and young people in this study said that everyone needs fun. Children talked about *'just playing'* – they didn't need to specify a type of play and seemed to be in love with the word itself, breaking into smiles and laughter just talking about it.

Younger children said they felt happy and excited when they were having fun with their pets, like the 6-year-old girl who said she was happy *'when my cats and chooks and me do stuff'*.

They liked team games and sport but spoke most, and became really animated, about the many unstructured ways in which they have fun such as: *'riding my bike, riding my RipStick, running, swimming, playing on the playground, kicking a football, going to friends' birthday parties, cooking and baking',* and *'playing chasey but not too rough'*.

*'It's a practice race and I'm feeling good
that I might win the race or Bailey might win
the race and get one point for red and I would
go second and get another point.
That's me doing some practice laps. I practice
but I still can't run as fast as Bailey.
I need to draw mum. [I'm] a bit excited that
we might win the race and my mum is here.
There are three arrows going around…
that shows me going towards the finish line…
the finish flags... mummy is watching me
at the stands and then that's mummy and
daddy watching me and daddy's
watching the girls… I've got two little sisters…
little and annoying', boy 6*

Many children's groups included a few boys (fewer girls) who liked computer games, like X-box and PlayStation. A six-year-old boy loved playing with his PlayStation in bed. Boys yearned for their games, with 8-and 9-year-olds wanting to stay up late, playing more games and getting to higher levels. Boys often mentioned getting banned from playing.

A 7 year old boy drew a picture of himself
when he was feeling happy because he'd been
playing computer games:

'my dad and I like going [to Darkzone]
*because I get to shoot people with these
laser guns and they get
deactivated so they can't shoot me'.*

He said that making new friends also made him happy.

Other activities children liked included listening to music, scrap-booking, doing art, reading, and sitting up in bed watching videos:

- *'just relaxing, no chores, just lie down, get a tan and paint your toe-nails', girl 12*
- *'I'm really happy up in my cubby – sometimes with friends, sometimes not; I go there when I get annoyed with my brothers', girl 10*
- *'… painting, you're having a good time', boy 10*
- *'I reckon things that make me happy are going to my friends' birthday parties and especially doing things I like, like going bowling', girl 10*
- *'playing with friends and having no-one teasing you', boy 9*
- *'I'm good at making brownies and cakes, and me and my sister sometimes have fights with flour', girl 10*
- *'I like sports and riding my bike and going to the park but normally with my cousins or someone, like I don't go by myself any more because people have been hanging around down the park, down the road behind Coles', boy 10*

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Regional and remote areas

Children living in regional and remote areas seemed to be more adventurous in their activities and talked about camping, fishing, riding motor bikes and other outdoor activities:

- *'I like climbing trees',* boy 10
- *'I like to go down the bush or go yabby-catching or tadpoling or something',* boy 11
- *' going to the bushland and exploring with friends',* boy 10
- *'running long distances with friends',* boy 9

In the Kimberley, a lot of boys talked about hunting and rodeo-riding.

Young people

For young people, having fun generally involved being with friends, not always having something planned but just seeing how things turned out:

- *'sleepover with lots of my friends, watching weird movies',* girl 14
- *'going downhill on your rollerblades and falling over and laughing with your friends',* girl 14
- *'not necessarily going to Disneyland or winning 1 million dollars',* girl 14
- *'going to an awesome party, sleeping in and just being with friends',* girl 14
- *'chilling, being with friends at the beach, listening to music, playing in bands',* boy 16
- *'being with a group of friends is always fun',* boy 16
- *'… just going to the beach or maybe the movies and stuff… just being with friends and being really silly and mucking around… chilling at people's houses and stuff and yeah, as Tom said, a little bit of stuff we shouldn't be doing sometimes, just to keep it all thrilling',* girl 16
- *'playing a bit of soccer with friends… but not as part of a team or anything',* boy 15
- *'just, you know, goofing around, playing jokes on each other, just laughing and being silly',* girl 14

A group of 16-year-olds agreed *'alcohol may be involved but that's what everyone likes'.*

Some 13-and 14-year-olds said it was important for them to have fun, because it makes life worth living and otherwise everything's too dull. When you're feeling good it lifts your confidence in yourself and life flows more easily:

- *'you feel like you can do anything but it is really you are having fun',* girl 14

Young people said that it doesn't matter where they go – if the mood is happy that makes it a happy place to be:

- *'just being with friends or family… seeing happiness, seeing other people happy, you can feel happy as well',* girl 14
- *'yeah, just the atmosphere and the setting and the milieu of the area has to be happy to make it like you're really, really happy there',* boy 13
- *'it doesn't really matter too much about the weather, as long as you're with your friends, you can always find something to do',* girl 14
- *'on a good day, I'd definitely be excited, yeah. Although another one, just very subtle, is frustration because the day goes so quickly* [when] *you're having a good day',* boy 13
- *'I like going to work actually, it's pretty crazy, but it's kind of like family there…. I am the oldest apart from my boss… and have to control what they do, and I have to take on the responsibility if they make a mistake but I like the way they look up to me, kind of thing',* girl 17

Sport

Sport was important to many children and young people. Children loved team games and sport of all kinds played a big role in lots of young people's lives:

- *I'm sort of like a sporty girl. I love kicking a football around and softball; I like to go for bike rides. It's really fun'*, girl 10
- [on a good day] *'I'd probably be at the hockey grounds with all the hockey players, training and getting ready for a big game',* boy 12

Generally, teenage girls discussed sport in terms of enjoyment and boys related it more strongly to fitness.

For those who took it seriously, playing well provided a feeling of accomplishment:

- *'It's a good feeling, doing good at sport',* boy 12
- *'I'm a swimmer… I like competing. I like that you get to work towards something and then it pays off',* girl 16

This girl aimed to make it into trials for the 2012 Olympics and was one of about ten research participants who, it emerged, were involved in sport at an elite level.

Indigenous boys spoke animatedly about their footy, as did a boy who took part in the South-West forum. He played for the WAFL Colts and aimed to play for the AFL:

- *'It's a dream. Not many kids make AFL and, you know, you've played it all your life – you've trained to make the team',* boy 15

Participants in the Perth interactive forum identified sport, exercise and fitness as one of the top three things that mattered most to them (the other two being freedom/independence, and friends/support networks). Some of these young people were from football or surf life-saving clubs so it could be expected that they might have a heightened interest in sport.

Forum participants discussed sport in greater depth than others involved in this research and identified the following factors as barriers to young people's engagement: transportation issues, financial costs, inadequate facilities and equipment, lack of role models, geographic isolation, parental restrictions and study. They suggested that more or improved facilities be provided, that clubs be better funded, more scholarships be provided to individuals and that young people could undertake fund-raising, join clubs and ask their friends to join up.

*'I'm playing netball at home because
I really like playing netball and
I don't let my brothers touch it.
That's Sara and that's me and Link and Karen…'*

This girl said when she plays netball she feels really happy because it's her favourite sport. She shoots goals but always misses.

*'Whenever I get home, I keep practising…
the ring used to be mum's…
that's a rainbow',* girl 6

Other activities

Many girls liked shopping – to see what's new, for *'the thrill of buying things'* and to spend time with friends. Girls in the metropolitan area liked going into Perth or Fremantle for the shopping, general environment and to socialise. They always saw someone they knew:

- *'It's really big so you have lots of time to walk around and talk and stuff. You get to see lots of fun things and you can talk about it',* girl 15

Going to the beach to meet friends was popular with lots of young people living in Perth and the South-West:

- *'I'm happy on a day when I get to the beach',* girl 14
- *'[a good day is] a warm day at the beach with my mates',* girl 14
- *'beach is good, even just like walking around town, not really looking at the shops… just an excuse to walk around and be with friends',* girl 15

Music was important to most young people – listening to it, playing in a band or going to concerts and festivals:

- *'Just like chilling with friends and stuff, play music if you've got some, that's always fun… I play in bands or watch other bands play… I love playing',* boy 16
- *'It's alright being by myself sometimes just chilling out, doing what I want, play guitar… maybe jamming with mates, playing music with my mates and all that',* boy 16
- *'playing music, jamming with dad and friends',* boy 17

While going to concerts and music festivals was popular, some young people pointed out that many of those they wanted to go to are restricted to people 18 years and over.

Other activities that young people enjoyed included:

- *'my friend would probably be doing cattle work with his dad… he likes being outside, really energetic',* boy 12
- *'dancing (hip-hop) and playing basketball in the street',* boy 13
- *'watching horror movies',* girl 13

Young people in regional and remote areas had limited opportunities to socialise, sometimes walking around the streets with friends or visiting each other's houses because there was nowhere else for them to go (see Facilities, below).

What stops you having fun

Boredom and *'being stuck inside'* were mentioned frequently by people aged 12 and older, who described feeling frustrated and angry, especially if they were unable to see friends, for reasons including too much homework, unable to get a lift/bus to meet them, or being grounded:

- *'I don't care what I'm doing, as long as I'm out with mates it's fine but if I'm stuck at home, it's like – my God – everything I want to do is boring',* boy 16

Other things that stopped them having fun included:

- *'drugs because it makes you paranoid, yeah and binge-drinking',* girl 14
- *'parents because they control everything, even how much the TV is on',* girl 14
- *'if there is lots of people around, like if it's a crowd, then you have got more peer pressure and you kind of feel like I don't want to embarrass myself by having a good time',* girl 14
- *'I don't like negative vibes at parties, fights and all that, don't enjoy it. Even with drinks at the beach there tends to be boys brawling and stuff like that. It's just so pathetic',* girl 16

In one group, brawling or fighting was said to be common among 14–15-year-olds at their school. It was said that *'about a quarter of Year 10s and half of Year 9s like to go out, get smashed and bash each other up'*:

- *'what they do is, they go to parties and then the parties turn into like fight clubs and they beat each other up'*, boy 14
- *'… and they wreck houses and break stuff and graffiti'*, girl 14

Indigenous participants in the Kimberley talked about children and young people buying and using alcohol and drugs but it wasn't clear where they got the money for this. The exception to this was a 15-year-old who said she knew girls of her age and younger who swapped sex for *'cigarettes and weed'*.

It was said that children and young people in the Kimberley got drunk and used drugs because there was so little for them to do:

- [they] *'haven't got anything to do with their lives but ruin it'*, boy 16
- *'you'll notice when people are going out of town and getting grog and stuff, you'll see a lot of kids hanging around at the tourist bureau waiting for them …they think it's fun* [to go off drinking] *and it's not really because anything could happen to you when you're drunk or you could just pass out anywhere on the streets'*, girl 14

Facilities

A lack of places to go and things to do was identified by most groups and was particularly commented upon by children and young people in regional and remote areas, who said facilities were non-existent, over-crowded or available only for adults. Lack of activities and places to hang out were constantly identified as one of the main reasons young people got drunk, used drugs and caused trouble.

Young people in Perth referred to *'these little youth centre things everywhere'* as not what they needed. They didn't want to be *'stuck in a building, playing activities'.* They said they wanted to be outside, with a place they could go to hang out and socialise, like a basketball hoop or a skate park, so *'even the girls go down and talk to their mates'.* They said they just need small areas dedicated to kids, not whole buildings.

An example of a good activity was said to be the Swan Aquatic basketball competition held on Monday nights. It is free and everyone likes it because it's not too organised or serious. Young people said they would like small, friendly, community skateboard competitions, not the massive ones that you have to get sponsored to be in.

Young people in the Wheatbelt said their youth centre was only open on Fridays after school and there was nothing to do from Monday to Thursday, apart from after-school sport for about an hour. They said it made a lot of difference to them when the pool was open because there was somewhere to go and *'you're guaranteed to have fun'.*

Young people in the South-West reported there was little for them to do:

- *'You go in town with a bunch of mates and you really just walk in circles'*, boy 16
- *'… town gets really, really boring… and really repetitive, like you do it a couple of Saturdays in a row or whatever and after a while we're just like, oh… you do find your own stuff to do but… we need another place'*, girl 16
- *'we need a youth centre type thing, something kind of cool, not organised by adults'*, girl 16

A group of 14-year-olds pointed out that they couldn't go to the movies with their friends who had turned 15 because they were unable to gain admission to MA classified films and didn't want always to watch *'younger people'* movies. This further reduced the places they could go:

- *'It's either, you have to be younger than this or older than this. There's a gap in between where there's nothing to really interest you. I think they should have more things for the different age groups. Most of the people who, like, drink beer and smoke dope and stuff, they... don't have anything to do. The reason they're doing that is because they don't know of anything else to do. They don't know how to have other fun'*, boy 15

- *'If you're bored and annoying your parents, some of them just kick their kids out of the house. They go around, they steal, they graffiti things, they wreck the joint',* girl 15

Children living in Perth identified dirty or dangerous parks, and play areas with only one swing, as limiting their ability to get out and play. Two 10-year-old girls said there was a lot of vandalism at their local park:

- *'There's all rude stuff down there… graffiti… that's why we don't go to the park any more',* girl 10
- *'because the graffiti could still be wet and you might get graffiti on your bum or something',* girl 10
- *'or the fumes as you're walking past an alleyway could be spray paint, it could still be wet, it could be fresh and then the fumes… it would be bad',* girl 10

Kids need to be kids

There was agreement among young people that children needed time just to play and enjoy their childhood:

- *'kids need time for play – and so do we',* boy 16

Young people expressed concern about *'kids these days'* who they said *'just want everything now'*:

- *'even with little five-year-olds and things who are exposed to things like Bratz and Hannah Montana. They all want to try and personify that, and try to have the make-up and dressing up and things much earlier',* girl 16
- *'in my parents' day, small things would amuse them… but now… the generation after us has got these adult attitudes and they're living in the adult head space and they've grown up too fast, they're not living as kids any more… they think "I'm too old" to play or go on a friend date or just do stuff that kids are supposed to do… innocent stuff, not going out drinking and partying, like kids that are younger and younger are doing',* girl 17
- *'even the world might change because the games are violent, and they might think that if you kill someone then they come back to life again. The world has become more violent because they're exposed to that on their games',* girl 16

Participants in a couple of groups were very concerned about what kids were able to see on TV news programs and it was suggested there be stricter censorship on what could be screened. Another view was that kids had to find out what life was about and shouldn't be protected. The groups were united in wanting to protect children but said they were not sure of the best way to do this.

BEING SAFE

Safety was discussed in terms of feeling safe and being taken care of by parents and family (including foster family), experience and knowledge of bullying at school, and the extent to which research participants felt safe when using public transport and in public places.

Feeling safe and cared for at home was not an issue for the majority of children and young people in this research, many of whom experienced the *'loving, supportive family'* they considered so important for a good life.

As discussed earlier, Indigenous children and young people had suffered the loss of many family members and children in the Kimberley described themselves as feeling sad, unwell, upset and unsafe when a funeral was on. Family violence, parents and other adults getting drunk, and going hungry were part of life for many of these children. Others were safe and cared for within their family but aware of the difficulties and stresses experienced by relatives and members of the community. Some families were supporting extended family and this reduced the food and money available for everyone, contributing to children feeling *'unsafe'* – a word that was used frequently in focus groups and appeared to include lacking a sense of security as well as concern for personal safety.

While some Indigenous children in this research did not live with their *'real'* families and longed to see them again, a non-Indigenous 6-year-old in Perth was fearful that her mum would turn up at her school and take her away. She lived with a foster family and felt safe and happy there but worried about having to be with her mum who she said was *'unsafe'*.

A few children said their parents hit them and they didn't like this.

Bullying

Bullying at school was raised as a concern in many focus groups, conducted in nine different schools. It was said that *'everyone'* knew it went on even if they had not experienced it themselves. Children said a lot of teasing and fighting went on, describing this as *'just normal'* and different from bullying.

Some children and young people appeared to be resigned to bullying, saying it's *'everywhere'* while others were angry, either from seeing others suffer or on their own behalf:

- *'this school has a really bad bullying system… especially some of the older kids'*, girl 9
- *'they just bully you in front of your friends and it's not cool… for me it's kind of a big problem… I don't get teased at school most of the time. I get teased by other kids that aren't in school. Like when I go to local footy in other towns, they always tease me a lot… they try to hurt your feelings'*, boy 10
- *'it hurts but you have to keep going and deal with it'*, girl 11
- *'they push and yell at you, follow you around the playground'* girl 11
- *'I don't like hearing the stories about bullying and that stuff'*, girl 12
- [it's] *'just cruel'*, boy 12

Three 13-year-olds in one group had a lot to say about bullying at their school: *'there's a lot of fighting, physical, everything mentally'* and *'it's really cruel because half the kids that get picked on don't even deserve it'*. They said people get picked on for the colour of their skin, or nationality:

- *'there's name calling, pushing, shoving, kicking, punching, everything'*, boy 13
- *'people screwed in the head… think bashing other people is good and there's a lot of that at this school'*, girl 13

Telling a parent or teacher *'kind of helps'*, according to some:

- *'but the bullying doesn't stop... like the parents come and deal with it and the parents leave him and he starts over again'*, boy 10
- *'yeah, except he goes worse. She or he. It's mostly he… like when you're playing a game and they like come and ruin it'*, girl 11

Being bullied was said to happen *'all the time, to everyone'*:

- *'I got bullied earlier in the year and that put a really bad perspective on my life. I didn't see things as funny any more'*, girl 14
- *'I got bullied. I got bullied in primary school'*, girl 14
- *'some people get bullied a whole lot more than other people and so it is just that they tend to have the darker outlook on life and then, as a result of people going "why are you so depressed" and stuff, it just makes you more depressed'*, girl 14
- (agreeing that it's widespread) *'people are bullies and make other people miserable'*, girl 15
- *'there's nothing you can do to stop bullying really and everyone* (i.e. every bully) *is different'*, girl 15

Bullying was thought to be most prevalent during primary school and Years 8–10, with much less of it as people became more mature:

- *'you don't see it as much when you get older, because people get a certain sense of maturity as they grow older… but in Year 8s and 9s and 10s you still do see a lot of it going on because people don't have respect for anyone and they just think it's funny'*, girl 16

- *'yeah if you watch like the first month of Year 8s, there's about six, seven fights because they're trying to find their place and if they were the top dog at their school they're coming in to a new world where there's another 10, 15 top dogs… they have to try, they believe they have to try, and fight for their spot'*, boy 16

Bullies were hated and many thought they should be punished:

- *'I get picked on, people call me names… it makes me angry and I want to punish them'*, girl 13
- *'I'm not forgiving… if I had the chance, I would hurt the people who did those things to me'*, boy 15

> ### Ideas from 10-year-olds for how to get rid of bullies:
>
> *'Get bigger kids to bully them back.'*
>
> *'Give kids that were bullied a special group where they could do fun things, and give bullies a special group where they could talk about things and have punching bags, and not take things out on real people.'*
>
> *'Make them write out "I won't hurt anyone ever again" 50 times, no 1,000 times.'*

Some children and young people looked for an explanation for bullying:

- *'most bullies don't have friends; they bully because something worries them... you need to have the courage to… tell them they are not nice people'*, girl 10

Having rumours spread about you was described as hurtful and was said to happen to both boys and girls. It did not appear to be considered bullying:

- *'this is just normal, everyday'*, girl 12
- *'it happens when a person is invited into your group and someone doesn't like them so they spread rumours'*, boy 12

Similarly, labelling and stereotyping was not described as bullying but was said to have negative effects:

- *'just because someone dresses a certain way and acts a certain way they get stereotyped into these groups… that can really affect people – just being labelled "emo" or something like that can really have some effect on their self-confidence'*, girl 16

Indigenous children in the Kimberley talked a bit about bullying, including a 9-year-old who said she got teased and sworn at, but much more about security, safeness and a safe life:

- *'on a bad day, you'd be feeling sad, unsafe'*, boy 9

These comments on bullying were raised, without prompting, by children and young people in focus groups. In contrast, the researchers directly raised the subject with participants at the Perth interactive forum and asked them to respond in writing to several questions about it.

Ten (30%), of whom 3 were boys and 7 were girls, said bullying still was or had been a significant problem for them. Comments about their experience included:

- *'the bullies thought I was weak and couldn't or wouldn't do anything'*
- *'bullying affects the growth of the child's mind, leading them to become introverted and have a very low self-esteem and lack of confidence, possibly leading to extreme cases of violence'*
- *'I was bullied because I play softball and people think that all softballers are lesbian'*
- *'I have had things stolen and broken… I go to an all-girls' school and they can be really mean'*
- *'People treated me badly and encouraged others to join in'*
- *'Verbal and cyber-bullying by girls at primary and high school about my body figure and how I'm "too nice" and have "too many problems"'*
- *'I have been ignored, un-included, talked about and degraded'*

The boys did not appear to have told anyone about the bullying but all the girls said they had, with mixed success in terms of receiving assistance.

When asked for suggestions for how bullying could be stopped, the three top responses were: tell someone and get support (e.g. from counsellors, teachers, friends, parents, support groups); raise awareness through anti-bullying campaigns, discussions and providing information; zero tolerance and punishment including harsher penalties and corporal punishment.

Safety in public places

Concerns about safety in public places were raised in only a few groups but were considered a major problem because young people living in cities depend on public transport to travel to school and work and to meet up with friends. Young people also just wanted to feel safe moving around their neighbourhoods.

In one of the Perth groups, six girls spoke about feeling scared at train stations and other public places, with comments such as:

- *'like, you kind of expect it to happen, but when it does happen you get freaked out. You kind of think, you know, what you would do at the time – and then it happens and you just… freeze'*, girl 15
- *'I hate [scabby] people. Like on the trains and you see them and you're scared of them [because they sit there and stare at you]'*, girl 15
- *'he started harassing us and telling us we were all going to grow up to be sluts and flash our boobs at random people… he was being violent towards other people… he was yelling at people and telling people they were smelly South Africans. He was just insulting random people. It was kind of scary, yeah'*, girl 15

Several girls in this group told of being scared by creepy guys saying *'inappropriate things'* at train stations, resulting in them shaking and being *'frozen with fear'* all the way home.

Girls in South-West groups said they were scared when using the bus station. They felt it was dangerous because of people hanging around there, drunk or on drugs:

- *'you don't want drugs in the community, those people are scary'*, girl 16

Two participants in the photo activity chose to take shots of themselves using public transport to illustrate the importance of this in their lives. One used buses and trains at night and had never had any bad experiences *'or not yet, anyway'*:

- *'Because of where I live, I spend a lot of time on public transport, buses and trains, getting to school. I like public transport because it helps me get where I need to go and I don't have my "Ls" or anything'*, girl 16

The other said she didn't mind catching trains but was scared by them as she had seen media reports about people being hit by them and had seen a lot of people playing "chicken". She knew of a boy who lost his legs playing chicken. This girl said she was frightened of tripping and falling onto the track or seeing somebody hurt.

In the same Perth group, mentioned above, girls and boys spoke of being scared on the streets in their neighbourhood:

- *'One time I was walking back from the train station and there was this creepy guy following me. On the corner of my street there's this shop. I didn't want to go home in case he found out where I live. So I just ran into this shop. The shop owners live behind the shop and know where I live. So they let me wait behind the shop and I stayed there for three hours until the guy actually left. He was just staying out there'*, girl 15
- *'Well, it's not the nicest place to live. Just going to the shops I get scared… usually I'll see a group of kids, it's not just, oh, five people, it's 20. The last I counted was about 15 and I was walking to the shops with a friend. Even if you don't approach them they'll still try to approach you. Even if they're just joking around you still feel threatened because they can really overpower you'*, boy 15

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In the same group, a girl said:

- *'I wasn't even in public one time when it happened. It was on Hallowe'en and we totally forgot it was Hallowe'en so I was just home alone. People – our neighbours who had been causing trouble lately – they just came to our house and this was like 12 guys at my door and another seven out on the street. They were like, oh can we come in. Like, oh trick or treat, and I told them to F off. Then they tried to force their way into my house. I got really, really scared. So I closed the door really fast and my dog was outside and they took my dog and spat all over her and then gave her back',* girl 15

A GOOD EDUCATION

There was widespread agreement that all children and young people needed to have a good education. There was, however, a significant difference in the way in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous research participants spoke about this.

Indigenous participants were quick to identify a good education as a priority for themselves and their friends and spoke of this as something they aspired to, rather than counted on happening. Attending school regularly was problematic for some Indigenous children and young people in the Kimberley.

For non-Indigenous children and young people, school attendance was a given and, for most, a good education was seen to be a matter of course; the focus of attention for these participants was on school as a place to meet their friends and on meeting school requirements such as homework and assignments. In this research, a good number of participants wanted to excel in their tests and examinations.

These two, distinct views and experiences are discussed below.

Indigenous children and young people

Indigenous participants in the Kimberley groups talked a lot about both needing and wanting to go to school every day:

- *'going to school every day and getting a good education is not easy… but it would be a good thing',* boy 14
- *'make your kids go to school so they can have a strong mind and a strong culture, and so they can learn and write when they get big, and like… because if someone asks you to read to them, like, any little kids, you won't know how to, or if someone wants you to check their work, like a little kid… you might not write it properly',* girl 9

The same girl said *'you need an education… if you go to school you'll know more things… like if you want to be a doctor, you'll know more things about that'.*

All the Indigenous children in the Kimberley groups understood that they could get a good education if they went to school every day and *'listened to the teacher'.* They wanted to learn to read and write:

- *'so when you want to go to the post office when you're big, if they ask you anything, then you can answer it straight away',* boy 10
- *'if you have to fill out a form or anything… you might know',* boy 11

These children expressed a very clear understanding about the connection between a good education, a job and earning money to buy a house, car or whatever they wanted. Boys said: *'if you get a good education, you can have a job, you can get lots of money, you can buy a new house, a car'.*

A group of boys and girls aged 10 said that, without education, people wouldn't get a job, make money or have a house. Other reasons for making sure every kid goes to school were:

- *'to make friends and learn',* boy 9
- *'to learn and write and have a strong culture',* girl 7

Participants in groups in the Kimberley expressed a lot of concern for friends who didn't go to school, saying they should be *'made to go to school every day'* or they would not have a good future:

- *'they won't even know how to read and write, they only learn about language'*, boy 14
- *'make sure every kid goes to school so that they meet friends and learn things that they should'*, boy 11
- *'…every kid in the state* [should] *go to school so they can get a better education and life so when they grow up they can understand themselves and people will respect them'*, boy 16

An 11-year-old boy said he liked school except *'sometimes, like every day, all the boys that go to my class, they are always acting naughty and being rude to the teacher, they, like, stop the teacher from telling us a story or anything'*.

Some girls aged 13–14 spoke out strongly in favour of making children and young people go to school every day so they could get a good job. They said everybody should go to school and listen to their mother, father and grandparents and that kids should be helped to learn.

The loss of family members and attendance at funerals was identified as one of the reasons children and young people did not attend school:

- *'the thing that will stop me going to school is when my close relatives or whoever pass away – that makes me feel very upset. I wouldn't want to do anything, I wouldn't want to eat, just sit down and cry all day'*, girl 15

In one Kimberley group, all the children said they'd be going away to Broome or Perth to attend high school. They knew their families would miss them and would worry about them but accepted that this was the plan for them to complete their education. Aside from this, they were concerned as to whether they would have so much homework to do there may be no time left for fun and play.

Indigenous children and young people in groups held in the Wheatbelt and in Perth did not express concern about school attendance and their view of school as a place for meeting friends and the challenges of meeting requirements (e.g. assignments, tests) was the same as that of non-Indigenous children and young people.

Non-Indigenous children and young people

As noted above, the majority of non-Indigenous children and young people focused their discussions about education on the school environment and school requirements.

Younger children, in particular, really enjoyed learning, playing team games and special occasions such as assemblies. Children at the intensive English centre said they loved seeing their teachers, playing with friends and learning. Most of the children in this group identified school as one of the things that made them happy.

For all ages, school was important for social reasons:

- *'I like school because all my friends are there and we do all these fun games and activities and we get to do news and free play'*, girl 6
- *'there are three things that make me happy: playing with my friends… the food in my lunchbox and the activities at school'*, boy 5
- *'I like going to school, you see all your friends'*, boy 13
- *'that's why school's good… being kind to them* [friends], *like, just not wanting anything from them… just hanging out with them'*, girl 14
- *'friends make up high school, pretty much'*, girl 13
- *'you get to see all your friends even though you have to do schoolwork and you might not have, like, a great teacher that day, but you still get to do like fun stuff in other classes'*, girl 14
- *'I know I sound like a loser saying this. Everyone's going to laugh at me. If you think about it, not everyone gets to go to school and stuff, and as my parents say "you're so lucky". I'm like, yeah, yeah but it's pretty true if you sit back and think about it'*, girl 14

School was also a place of escape, a refuge, for some:

- *'yeah, because like school life and home life are two different things and if… you have a bad home life and you bring it to school then you're never going to be happy because school is, it might be bad because you get homework and all... [but] you can be someone else at school. You don't have to just be upset... but still, it is a chance to... feel better at school, because you've got people there',* girl 14
- *'I don't mind it. It's where I can escape from my family, so I don't mind school',* boy 13
- *'school is more of an escape for me, which sounds really topsy-turvy 'cause I hate school but it's good 'cause you can go there and not think about anything. Because as soon as I get home, like as soon as my parents – I don't know, it's hard to explain – at home I've got like a set of problems within myself, and a set of problems within my family, and then I've got a set of problems in school, but I'd rather deal with the school ones. Because they're not emotional so you can just go, hey, it's school, going to have to do it anyway, going to graduate and I'd just rather do that, and get in that state of mind, then go home and deal with the family and personal problems',* girl 17

Many research participants appeared to be competent or high-achieving students. Others struggled at school, like the 12-year-old boy for whom a good day was *'getting a good behaviour sheet… and no fights'.* He said the last week of school was boring because all the classes watched movies and the time went *'twice as slow'.*

For young people with severe learning difficulties, school was frustrating. Some attended full-time and others combined school with TAFE (Technical and Further Education) college. At least one did not like her TAFE courses and it appeared she may not have had much choice about what she was enrolled in. Many saw a clear link between getting a job and achieving their hopes for the future and said they needed to work hard at school, learn new things, concentrate more and get a good report.

Young people in a South-West town who completed the short, hard copy survey, identified a good education as very important to their lives now and in the future. Many aimed to finish school and some hoped to achieve a sufficiently high TER (Tertiary Entrance Rank) to gain entry to a preferred university course while others wanted to do cooking or hairdressing at a TAFE college.

A 13-year-old boy who had spent a long time in hospital was worried about missing school. He had exams coming up before the end of the year and had already missed a lot of schoolwork. Because he had a scholarship for the music program at school he had to keep up a B+ grade: *'If I can't do that then they kick me out of the program. My mum, she's gone to my school and asked if they can collect up work for me and she's going to bring that in for me. Also, they're giving me an extension for my exams that I have to do... to help me with my learning.'*

Concerns

There were a few complaints about teachers who were grumpy or otherwise hard to deal with and some subjects were loathed, but one 15-year-old girl pointed out that not all complaints about teachers or school should be taken seriously: *'school's not bad, people just like to say it sucks'.*

Another 15-year-old rebuked her friends for complaining, saying: *'I love school, I love chemistry. You just need to embrace education. Knowledge is power in this world people, seriously'.*

In some groups there was a strong perception of a lack of coordination by teachers, causing unnecessary stress for students:

- *'we have no homework for weeks on end and then we get homework from all our teachers and it's so hard to complete it all… we're like working all through the night',* girl 15
- *'I swear they just all congregate and say, "all right now, every subject we'll go a test on Wednesday, due Thursday – all right, let's go, and we'll tell you last period"',* boy 16
- *'but the thing is, they're not meant to do that at all. In the curriculum they're not meant to but they're still doing it',* girl 16

- *'when it gets closer to exams, they go, "oh right we haven't given you these three tests before – last week before exams, here's three tests" and every subject does that'*, boy 16

For some, this frustration was exacerbated by a sense of being *'guinea pigs'* for a new course: additional tests came up without warning, in the last week, in a way that disadvantaged them and at a time when they needed to be studying for exams.

A group of 16-year-olds agreed they didn't like *'the way the school system is set up'*. They felt they were *'the guinea pigs of this stupid, stupid system'* (Outcomes Based Education):

- *'we shouldn't be punished just 'cause they want to try it out… from a learning perspective we know what's not working but we can't do anything about it a lot of the time because it's above us to be able to do anything'*, girl 16

Some young people were concerned that fellow students who behaved badly, were disrespectful to teachers and disrupted classes, would have a negative impact on the education of people like themselves, who wanted to do well:

- *'next year… there's 30–35 people in most classes because the teachers are being cut down because of the half year[22] that's coming through, and I'm worried that we're going to get, like, dickheads in TEE classes... and they're going to do what they've done for Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 – disrupt the teachers so that they get mad and end up not teaching properly'*, boy 15

For this reason, they hoped that teachers would be stricter in Years 11 and 12.

In three groups, quite a few participants had part-time jobs and felt pressured by trying to manage these as well as school workloads that were said to be excessive and could be better coordinated:

- *'[a bad day is], exams, lot of tests. Have to work that day and I already have a lot of tests, lot of homework and assignments and they give you tests and they just overload you with school work'*, boy 16
- *'I barely had a holiday over the last two-week break. I caught up with my mates once. That's it. I just went to work and did assignments'*, boy 16
- *'like a recent day with too many assignments and you can't hang out with your mates, you can't do any sport and trying to do bloody assignments when you're working and you've got to do housework and everything in between it and that's horrible'*, girl 16
- *'assignments, like essays, all due in at the same time, like you have a load and then… you don't have time to do it, you have to work… so you have to stay up all night or get up early to finish it off'*, girl 17

Stress and pressure

The words 'stress' and 'pressure' arose frequently in groups, from around age 12 onwards. Primary school was said not to be too stressful although it could be when too much was due on one day and there was a lot of homework to get through:

- *'like when someone can't do one piece of work they just get worried and they just don't know what to do'*, boy 12
- *'you go to a school five times a week, with like six hours, and then go home and have to do even more work. It would be okay if you only had maybe a little bit of homework but not the stacks and stacks of work we have to do at home'*, girl 12

Children who were about to move from primary to secondary school talked about not wanting to get lost at a bigger school and wondered how they would cope with the increase in homework they'd heard about from older brothers and sisters:

- *'because it's not good if you just sit in a classroom all day, every day and just do work and don't get any fitness. When you get home you're going to have to do work from all the homework. You're just going to be flat out'*, boy 12
- *'because lots of teachers don't know that other teachers have set homework'*, girl 12

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[22] In 2003, the school starting age was changed, resulting in only half the usual number of Year 8s in 2010.

Chapter 4: What We Found

Two boys spoke repeatedly about feeling pressured by schoolwork:

- *'I go to bed every night and I'm exhausted and I'm thinking, what have I got tomorrow, I've got this assignment, what am I going to do in it, what I'm going to do in this test, what am I going to do, how am I going to answer this question? Like you'll be stuck in homework and thinking how am I going to refer to this text or an essay and you're thinking. Then you go to bed and all you can do is think about it because you think – this is due in the morning, what am I going to do?'* boy 16

- *'all my spare time has been shut down to study and my parents have reinforced that* [and] *that's not good because I'm not with my mates, so yeah a lot of it is just stress, very stressful',* boy 16

It was perceived that parents, who thought they were helping, exacerbated the pressure by constantly telling them to study for exams but did not realise they also have to study for tests and do assignments which count towards a TER score:

- *'so they're going, "do your study, do your study for your exams" and you're going "holy shit, I need to do my assignments"',* girl 16

Some thought that parents didn't really understand how school works and what young people were dealing with:

- [someone needs to explain] *'they have this amount of homework to do, they can't really do much else… let them do this homework… and they need free time, too',* girl 16

Some stress was said to be self-inflicted:

- *'I feel sometimes it's my own fault… when I don't study I feel bad because I know really I've let myself down when I really should have been studying. I guess because I know I could really do better',* boy 15

- *'I think we also put a lot of pressure on ourselves 'cause we have respect for our teachers and we know they're going to be disappointed in us if we don't do what we were supposed to have done… throughout school you're taught you need to please people, to get something you want to get, so to get the marks you need you have to show that you're able to be creative and things like that, as well as keeping to the Curriculum Council's requirements',* girl 17

Two suggestions were made for reducing the pressure on students in Years 11 and 12: (1) to have only four days of school, starting earlier or finishing later, to provide an extra day for catching up on assignments and study; (2) for all assignments and tests to be stopped at the start of term 4.

One shot

Some young people believed that their lives would be determined by decisions they made about a course of study and achieving high scores now:

- *'with school you've only got one shot at it which really annoys me, if I blow that shot, and I've only got one way to do it. That's the way the school tells me I have to do it. The teachers, they only have one way to teach me everything I need to know. So I can't think any way differently and if I screw up, that's it. It's over. So that's roughly 50 years – two-thirds of my life - that I can't get back. I've screwed it up for years',* boy 15

In the same group, another boy said *'I know if I screw up I don't get another chance'.* For these young people, the fear of failing themselves, parents and teachers was considerable:

- *'I want to get somewhere, like go through uni and stuff. But I'm scared that I'm not going to be good enough to do it. I think that's my greatest fear, not being able to get where I want to be',* girl 14

The idea of *'only one shot'* was expressed in several groups and, each time, others explained that there were *'always back ways'* to get into university or gave examples of family or friends who had re-done courses or gone back and taken new courses they had not done previously and were then able to pursue their ambitions. The belief that life will be determined at 15 or 16 was, nevertheless, strongly held by some.

Teachers who applied excessive pressure were scorned for implying that failing a test or exam meant *'your whole life's screwed'*:

- *'teachers make it sound so dramatic. That this is your only chance to get in… but we can go back and* [do it] *again'*, girl 15

Geographically isolated young people

The geographically isolated young people who participated in the research had some specific suggestions about how education could be improved:

- schools should encourage questions and discussion and not make assumptions (e.g. *'don't teach that evolution is a fact'*)
- have lessons about life (including ways of building self-esteem, resilience and motivation) and manners, rather than just teaching facts.

THE BASICS

In focus groups with those aged 8 years and older, the need for children and young people to have what they usually called 'the basics' (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, enough money to live, parents who looked after them, health-care) was raised in two different ways.

For the non-Indigenous majority, it was considered to be so obvious as not to require much discussion except to express real concern for children who were going without and appreciation for their own, more fortunate circumstances – even when these included money problems.

When Indigenous children and young people spoke, especially those in the Kimberley, it was from personal experience of being hungry or in need, or from knowledge of families who were struggling to provide for their children as well as for extended family.

In the Kimberley groups, Indigenous children and young people talked a lot about needing money for food, clothes and other items. They didn't want money for themselves but to buy enough food not to be hungry, to be confident there would be food in the house, and to have clothes and other things they needed to live. Examples included being able to have telephone contact with family if they went away to school, and to buy a coffin if someone passed away.

Boys aged 10 and 11 talked about *'no money and you're that hungry, no food at home'* and being *'stranded somewhere and you've got no food or anything'*. Boys and girls age 8 and 9 agreed *'it's bad when no one buys a feed – then we're starving… sad, angry and starving'*.

While many of these participants were in need of basics like food and clothes, they were aware of, and concerned about, other children who were worse off, especially those whose parents went to the pub instead of looking after them:

- *'get drugs and alcohol off this world so kids can have a good life'*, boy 10

Young Indigenous people from the Kimberley who were interviewed in Perth saw this as a major issue, saying that parents should *'make sure their kids were inside'* because it was their responsibility to look after children. They said some parents spent all their money on alcohol and forced kids to steal because they were hungry:

- *'some kids are homeless, starving, living on the streets, and abused by parents… they drink and don't worry about the kids'*, girl 16
- *'you have, like, parents where they're just big time alcoholics, they just drink, they don't worry* [about their kids], *they smoke dope and whatever'*, girl 15

In some Kimberley groups both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants said that street guards and more police were needed because lots of people were fighting and little kids were wandering around all night:

- *'no one's looking after the kids and it's dangerous'*, girl 11

According to a girl who works in a shop:

- *'there's like five-year-olds and they're out at 8 o'clock until closing time and we're like what are you guys doing out at this time, "oh we just come in to get lollies and stuff", like they shoplift because they don't have any money'*, girl 14

Non-Indigenous young people in the Kimberley said that many Indigenous people of their age didn't get enough to eat and needed *'clothes on their back, a roof over their heads and food in their bellies'*:

- *'in my opinion it would be rare for them to have a good day. A good day for them would be where they maybe get a voucher from the school for being good at school and they get a free lunch from the canteen or something… so they actually get some food'*, boy 14

Healthy living

Indigenous children in the Kimberley groups spoke quite a bit about eating healthy food, not smoking and getting exercise, so they would be fit. They also spoke about needing *'good medical equipment'* and more doctors and nurses. Some non-Indigenous and Indigenous children were concerned about the Derby Hospital closing, saying that Broome was too far away in emergency situations.

Money

While Indigenous children in the Kimberley groups needed money for food, other Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people discussed money in a different context. Their views are discussed below.

Children

Non-Indigenous children scarcely raised money as a topic, except to fantasise about lollies, chocolate and toys or identify money as a future need (i.e. when they were grown up). They mostly spoke of money as necessary to allow children in other countries, and poor families, to have enough to live on. They often compared themselves to other children and felt that they were fortunate.

Indigenous children also spoke about money as something they wanted in the future, after getting an education and a job: when they earned their own money, they would be able to have a nice house, a car and other things because money lets you choose. They also said that if they had a lot of money they could share it with others. For them, money was the key to getting the things they dreamed of, like a mansion, helicopter, car, trips to theme parks, or clothes.

Young people

Non-Indigenous and Indigenous young people in Perth, the South-West and the Wheatbelt all raised similar needs and concerns relating to money. They spoke about needing at least some money to socialise and some said that without money they were unable to go out with friends (and develop their friendships and identity as part of a group) to have fun and enjoy the company of people their own age. Others gave examples of not being able to afford transport or movie tickets and said that having some money *'makes you feel more powerful'* because you can make decisions about going out or shopping. Not everyone aspired to *'buying stuff'* and some who did were able to indulge by getting money from parents or by having a part-time job. Some 16- and 17-year-olds in Perth also said that not being able to afford alcohol meant they couldn't go to parties unless they *'mooched'* off mates.

Money and education

The cost of further education was a major concern for young people in the South-West who were angry about potential changes to the Youth Allowance which they believed were unfair and could prevent them from going to university:

- *'it's going to be so hard to do everything money-wise because they've cut out our youth allowance. They only give scholarships to the extremely smart people or the lucky people – we don't get anything, there's nothing in the middle. Poor people or poverty-stricken people who couldn't even dream about it, they get it, but everybody in the middle – us pretty much – we've got almost no chance… I might have to take a two-year break[23] and you lose so much potency in those two years',* boy 16

They felt that people who were *'doing the right thing'* by staying in school and working hard to earn qualifications or a degree should receive more financial assistance:

- *'that's the extremely hard path whereas, the easy path, you just go "oh screw it, I'll become a brickie and get paid lots of money"',* boy 16
- *'I think everyone has their issues with study and stress and just the pressure of it all but most definitely money is the biggest factor of it all',* girl 16

Issues for young people in the South-West who needed to go to Perth for university were said to be:

- meeting government requirements to work for a gap year or longer to qualify for funding when it was difficult for them to get jobs in their local area;
- the cost of living away from home;
- whether they could combine study with a part-time job (especially in more demanding courses) without failing or getting poor results; and
- eligibility for Youth Allowance scholarships.

Part-time jobs

Attitudes to having a job ranged from those who said they did not need one to those who wanted to earn some of their own money and included a few who needed to work to help support themselves and pay for text books, etc. In one group, five 14-year-olds said they would like to have a job and two of these said they needed one. Some 15-year-olds spoke of parents telling them they had to work as they would not be fully supported.

Many viewed earning their own money as important to their feeling of independence now and the start of becoming fully independent, responsible adults:

- *'it makes you feel independent… you don't have to ask your parents',* girl 15

Some found it hard to manage work and study, while others enjoyed their jobs because it got them away from family and they liked the acknowledgement they received for being a valued worker.

In the Wheatbelt, young people worked on farms or in shops and saw this as a normal part of their lives. They said there was no shortage of jobs for anyone wanting to work and little else for them to do in their spare time. This was a younger group who would be going away to complete their secondary education and had no experience of combining work and study beyond Year 9 or 10.

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[23] At the time focus groups were being conducted, changes to the Australian Government Youth Allowance scheme were under debate and new legislation was proposed. Young people believed the gap year would be extended to 18 months. Because some of the courses they wanted to take did not allow mid-year entry, they would effectively have a two-year gap between completing school and starting university.

Money and happiness

The phrase *'money buys happiness'* was used by individuals in a few groups in Perth but was always disputed by others:

- *'if you don't have money you don't have fun'*, girl 15
- *'with money you can do funner stuff but you can still do fun things without money'*, boy 15

Some young people said they'd like *'heaps'* of money but didn't know what they'd do with it beyond the vague idea that this would make for a good life. Others were practical:

- *'money is not the key to happiness but it's good having it and it goes towards happiness'*, boy 13
- *'you could take your kids to the pool, that would make them happy so you're happy'*, girl 13

There was widespread agreement with these views:

- *'I know a lot of people say that all you really need is happiness but it really is not true in today's economy. You have to have money to survive and if we had more money in our schools and more funding and more scholarships and everything it would just set everyone up a lot better for the future'*, girl 16
- *'I don't really think that material possessions can make you happy… it may make you happy for a day and then you get sick of them after a while and then you just want the newest and latest one'*, girl 17

It was said that while older people think young people need MySpace, FaceBook and the latest phone and iPod this was not true:

- *'we'd still be happy without them… you do it because everyone else is on it but would be able to survive fine without it'*, girl 14
- *'material things are good but what you really want are the things you know you can't have, like for that person to stop hating me or that person to stop acting that way and stuff like that'*, girl 14
- *'it doesn't matter how much more stuff you get, sometimes you've just got to be happy with yourself, because it doesn't matter how many iPods or phones or friends or whatever you have, if you're not happy then it won't matter'*, girl 15

Some children were critical of people their own age for wanting more possessions and not being grateful for how good life is in Australia:

- *'basically, I think people take things for granted. Like the lifestyle and everything, so they're like, oh wish we had this…* [a particular toy]*'*, girl 12
- *'I'd like for maybe one day or a week to take away some people's computers, or they're just not allowed to use them, and just see what they do with their time instead of sitting around going "I'm bored". Because then you'll use your imagination more and you'll be more like the Africans. They don't have all that kind of stuff and they use their imaginations and make up things and everything'*, girl 12

One young person in the photo activity had strong views about consumerism, including her dislike of, and participation in, this aspect of life:

- *'there's something about mass-produced… stuff, that I don't particularly like.* [the shot] *is just about chain stores and all this kind of mass-produced merchandise and the whole principle of capitalism in a way – not that I'm in any way against it 'cause I'd just be completely hypocritical, but just the want for stuff. I think this epitomises it – there's things everywhere, it's cheap, it's nasty – it's got it all, really'*, girl 16

BEING ACKNOWLEDGED

Children and young people wanted the things that were important in their lives to be acknowledged by adults and the broader society. They also wanted to feel personally valued and appreciated, in particular by parents, friends and teachers.

Indigenous children and young people taking part in this research said their culture, and traditional values such as respect for Elders, sharing and being close to family, was of great importance to them.

Children in several groups held in the Kimberley spoke of the need for *'a strong culture'* and some spoke about *'fighting for your culture'.* Some enjoyed time spent with grandparents who taught them about culture and strong family bonds.

An example of the strength of family bonds was provided by an Indigenous girl:

- *'they* [family] *are the people that you love the most in this world and like, just say you had a really good job going and something happened to your family member and then your boss said you can't go because you're going to lose your job, then that's something you have to risk. That bothers me. If I got a good career going – I don't want to ruin that – but my family comes first',* girl 16

Non-Indigenous children and young people in the focus group discussions were seeking a more individualised kind of acknowledgement. Being complimented by parents, teachers, coaches or friends made them feel accomplished. They wanted to be treated seriously and to get confirmation that they were doing OK, or even excelling if this were the case. This was similar to views expressed by young people attending the Perth interactive forum.

Participants in the Perth interactive forum were asked what their friends, parents and teachers did that made them feel valued or appreciated, or not valued or appreciated. The top responses are summarised below:

	Feel valued/appreciated	Feel _not_ valued/appreciated
Friends	Give me compliments Include me Invite me places	Ignore me Criticise me Don't include me
Parents	Compliment me Congratulate me Help or support me	Restrict freedom Get angry Ignore or criticise me
Teachers	Compliment me Congratulate me Encourage, advise, help or support me	Disrespect me or my views Get angry Put me down or criticise me

Being acknowledged or made to feel special when you have done something well was said by focus group participants to be really important to them. One example was performing on stage and hearing everyone clapping when you've finished. A 13-year-old musician said when this happened it made him feel proud of himself. Others had these examples:

- *'getting chosen to go to the interschool sports for the triple jump was really good',* girl 10
- *'getting an A in a maths test… you feel happy and proud',* girl 12

A 12-year-old spoke from experience when he explained how important it was to make people who are sick feel special because *'when I feel special, I kind of feel like I'm getting better'.*

Another boy who had been hospitalised thought that the "Starlight Club" at Princess Margaret Hospital worked really well for children:

- *'they* [should] *have a special thing where they acknowledge kids for being excellent. They like things that are just for kids or teenagers like Starlight* [at PMH]. *Like, it's a whole place that's dedicated for kids, that's why kids love going there. It's kid-friendly and there's games to play and there's always these nice people there that are always smiling and happy to see you there',* boy 13

Chapter 4: What We Found

Respect

The need for people to have more respect for each other was a topic raised in several focus groups. Many of the comments related to young people's behaviour, including a lack of acceptance of difference:

- [what bothers me] *'is probably the amount of disrespect and stuff, that's kind of about people don't accept others for who they are. Like the people that are racist and homophobic or whatever and they just don't see that everybody is unique',* girl 15

- *'even just not saying anything is still being prejudiced, if you just listen to them being racist or someone teasing someone because of their age or whatever… what they look like. You have to stop them because if you just don't say anything, it's still participating because you're not saying to stop because that's wrong',* girl 13

- *'… acceptance, just that everyone could be different, because everyone is different from everyone else, and no typecasting or whatever',* girl 15

According to a group of 16-year-olds, there are a lot of *'bad kids'* who don't respect teachers. This was said to be because they had never been encouraged to develop social skills or had limited exposure to different experiences. One view was that learning about human interactions would be helpful and interesting, if it centred on people rather than being a scientific approach:

- *'more about people than this sort of trying to understand everything',* girl 16

There were also comments about some teachers not respecting students.

Being listened to and having their ideas taken seriously made young people feel they were respected. Just over half of the participants in the Perth interactive forum said that in their families they were listened to and had their ideas taken seriously. More boys than girls reported being taken seriously by their families. Half the participants said that their friends listened to them and took their ideas seriously. More girls than boys reported being taken seriously by their friends.

A 16-year-old interviewed at the South-West forum said she would like people to talk to her more and ask questions about how she's feeling and what kind of day she's had, instead of her asking them questions:

- *'I do a lot of things for my friends, and my family as well, and I would kind of like that in return… just being with them and stuff… they don't really ask for my opinion, which is a bit sad',* girl 16

Trust

Some young people said they wanted more trust from the wider community:

- *'for example, in the morning some people go to the shops before school. There's security guards watching all the time. People in Woolworth's or something – they're watching down the aisles and they're watching you the whole time… it might only be a very small number of people who actually do anything* [steal from shops] *but they just assume that everyone's like that',* girl 15

A couple of young people talked about being kicked out of shops for no reason but another view was that shop lifting happens and owners have good reason to protect their property:

- *'kids do steal from the shopping centres… there's a reason why all the security guards are there. If they don't do that then they probably lose money from it. So I'm not sure that we can really complain about that, even if we didn't do anything… people sort of bring it on themselves so we kind of have to pay for that now* [with lack of trust]', girl 15

As discussed earlier, young people also wanted to be able to trust that teachers or counsellors they went to with problems would maintain confidentiality.

Young people felt that the community expected either too much or too little of them:

- *'they either expect you to succeed so well or they expect you to muck up and cause havoc',* girl 15
- *'the way that society reacts to us and how we're sort of – we're picked on by everyone else, really. Either we're not smart enough to understand – we don't understand simple things – or we're not allowed to do certain things. Because we rebel and we give ourselves a name',* boy 15

This was seen to be another form of labelling, similar to *'generation this-and-that, X or Y'* used by adults who had no idea what young people were all about and treated them as if they were all the same.

FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

This was a big issue for young people, who talked a lot about wanting the freedom to choose how they spend their time, to make decisions for themselves and to learn to become independent. Children related freedom more to being away from parents, able to get on and do things *'like enjoy their life'* (instead of being stuck inside):

- *'kids should be free to get out in the open, go by yourself, climb trees and things',* boy 9
- *'… make them have freedom… at least go camping once a year or something… and more fishing',* boy 11
- *'sort of be free instead of having your parents telling you to do every tiny thing, where you can't go and have your own childhood, like go and play with your friends after school… so that when you grow up you won't be naughty and have to go to gaol because you would just sort of know how to have your own life',* girl 10
- *'… your parents control things but then, to have a good sort of teenage life, they also need to give you some sort of freedom to do what you want, or freedom to just go for a walk or something like that… you need some rules but you need some freedom',* girl 13

Some young people commented on *'how much your parents try to keep you away from things'.* Another frustration was:

- *'parents hanging over you… watching your every move. You can't go out. You can't do this. You have to do all this sort of stuff – you have your chores',* girl 15

Freedom was said to be important because:

- *'if you're too cramped and you're being told what to do, you don't want to do anything and you rebel and then you run away and then you get in trouble',* boy 15
- *'if you're a parent and you say "no" all the time, then your kids are going to be rebellious',* boy 15
- *'kids need parents who accept them for what they are, and friends who accept them for who they are, and they need to accept themselves for who they are… but they also need freedom to get out and do things',* girl 14

Freedom within limits

While children and young people said they needed freedom to some extent, they also said they needed boundaries or guidelines:

- *'you need guidelines and stuff. You need rules because part of growing up is, like, breaking them, but also to be restricted by them',* girl 16
- *'you can't let your kids go around doing anything they want… they could cause mayhem… there has to be some sort of boundaries',* boy 13
- *'you can't let your parents give you too much freedom because then you will just go out and get drunk and get high',* girl 14
- *'but at the same time, they have to let you learn the hard way for yourself',* girl 14

A lot of young people wanted the opportunity to practise making decisions, including making mistakes:

- *'before you do something you should have some experience of it to know what to expect so you're not completely oblivious… it'd work a bit better than just chucking you in the deep end'*, boy 15
- *'we need to know what to expect, but then we still have other choices to make when we actually go out and do it by ourselves'*, girl 15
- *'… we need the chance to mess up and make our own mistakes'*, girl 15

Three-quarters of the boys, but only half of the girls, participating in the Perth interactive forum felt they had enough say in decisions affecting them.

Independence

Young people liked being able to get around by themselves without having to rely on parents for a lift.

Almost one-third of 16-year-olds taking part in the photo activity chose to illustrate this by taking shots of their bikes, themselves travelling on the train or other depictions of the sense of freedom and independence they experienced in being able to get themselves to where they want to go:

'I took this [photograph] *because that's pretty much my main transport. All of my friends live around me so I just use my bike to ride around and have fun with my friends – go to the beach'*, boy 16

Daylight saving contributed to a sense of independence for some. For example, a 16-year-old girl spoke of the pleasure of being able to walk home after Scouts finished at 9.30 pm while it was still light.

Limitations to this kind of independence came from feeling unsafe, as discussed earlier, and a lack of public transport, an issue for young people in the South-West, especially for those living out of town who had to rely on their parents for a lift. Even those living closer were restricted in their movements during school holidays and at weekends if their parents were working and there were further limitations if parents did shift work:

- *'even just not having a licence, it drives me nuts because I have to rely on people so much and all they do is whinge at me continuously… I've got school, I'm tired, I'm stressed, don't shit with me, just drive me there. It will take you five minutes. Just having a licence you can drive somewhere… you're self-sufficient because you know "I can do that"'*, boy 16

As discussed earlier, young people in Perth and the South-West talked of feeling unsafe on the streets, during the day and especially after dark, and how this restricted their movements:

- *'in the olden days, people could just walk around and be safe on the street. We can't do that now, these days, because there's like heaps of creepy people out there'*, girl 14

Things were different in the Wheatbelt however, where 14-year-old girls talked about walking around the streets at night, listening to iPods or meeting up with friends. It was a favourite activity; they enjoyed the freedom of it and felt completely safe.

OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS

Aside from identifying the eight aspects of wellbeing, the qualitative research revealed other important findings about the views, experiences and beliefs of children and young people.

These related to:

- some of the stress in their lives
- the concern they feel for others
- their hopes for the future
- their capacity to influence life events
- the people they admire (role models)
- their ideas for making life better for children and young people.

Their thoughts are reflected below.

"STRESSING OUT"

"Stressing out" was a term often used by young people when they spoke of the things that worried them. It was raised in connection to relationships (with family, friends, people at work and teachers) and educational achievements. Some of the stress appeared to be quite serious (as discussed under A Good Education, page 55) while some was more like the everyday variety, such as hassles with brothers and sisters, *waking up feeling bad and then everything just seems to go wrong after that… just little things and they get to you*, disliking certain subjects or teachers at school, or getting a hard time from a boss or customers at work:

- *'if your parents are having a bad day then that kind of affects you – or if your friends are – like, you go to school expecting to laugh around with your friends but if they're having a bad day then you can't really laugh with them. So you end up having a bad day as well',* girl 15
- *'random people walk past and say something bad about you',* girl 15
- *'even strangers can cause stress. If someone yells something at you, you just kind of wonder why that happens. Once I got a call from some random guy and he was like – yeah I got your number off one of your good friends and he said he had been sleeping with you – and stuff like that. Just rumours spread and it really distresses you',* girl 15
- *'I find it hard at school – this sounds really immature – but when you get in trouble with the teachers they don't really try to understand your point of view',* girl 15

Feeling overwhelmed

Some young people sounded and admitted to being overwhelmed by stress and problems:

- *'one problem at a time you could fix… but with five you can't think where to begin… you don't have the energy to go back and fix up little things',* girl 14
- *'once you start [fighting with parent] it hurts your pride to go back [and apologize]',* girl 14
- *'I can be having a happy day, then during the day, the smallest thing can piss me off and then it ruins my whole day. Like if my parents, they tend to fight a lot, so that just ruins my mood… I don't even think about my emotions they're just everywhere all at the same time. I find myself sitting at home a lot… just doing nothing… then when I go to bed I can't sleep and I'm lying there thinking, "I've got to do this and I've got to do this" and my mind is just thinking',* girl 17

Dealing with stress

Young people said their usual ways of dealing with stress were to talk to family or friends, get away, write in a diary or journal, do something physical or just *'go with the flow'*.

Talk to family or friends

When things were not going well, older children and young people usually talked to family or sought the company of friends:

- *'I talk to mum and it makes me feel better'*, girl 12
- *'I talk to my brother – he's younger, so he listens'*, boy 12
- *'I go home and say hello to my dad and play with my friends'*, boy 11
- *'I only tell people my own age or tell my big sister'*, girl 11
- *'I confide in my best friends because they know how I feel'*, girl 15
- *'I'd just go to* [my best friend] *to talk about it and then if she wasn't there… family means everything to me, friends as well… I've got older brothers and sisters so I've got lots of people'*, girl 14
- *'I try not to let it show so that I don't get everyone coming up to me going "are you okay?", because you don't really want to talk about it* [if I was going to talk] *I'd probably go to Sarah because she's my best friend. If it was something that I couldn't talk to Sarah about, like a family thing, I'd go to my mum or something'*, girl 14

It was said that teachers could be helpful *'if they care about you and know when to be a friend and when to be a teacher'*.

Indigenous children and young people said they talked to family rather than friends.

A few Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people said they wouldn't talk to anyone but would just *'keep it inside'* and some said they had no-one to talk to.

Get away

Getting away from the source of the stress was helpful for some young people:

- *'If I'm angry I normally want to go by myself or I'll probably just want to do something… just go to the beach, stop thinking, kind of thing'*, girl 14
- *'surfing, you're in control and on your own,'* girl 14
- *'a really stressful social thing, spending some time by yourself is good. But if it's been really stressful family-wise, you want to be with your friends, you want to have an escape'*, girl 14

Write it down

Some girls wrote their thoughts and feelings in a diary, sometimes using metaphors to maintain their privacy:

- *'the cool thing about the poems in my diary is that even if someone read them, I can use words that only I would know – like what I'm talking about – but they wouldn't realise. I can use my own terms of metaphors. So in poetry everyone sees it in their own way but I'll know what I'm talking about'*, girl 15
- *'I tell my friends and write it down in a diary to get it out of my head'*, girl 11

Do something physical

As mentioned earlier, some children said they kicked the door or wall and one had a punching bag. Most boys and some girls reckoned any kind of sport or physical activity (e.g. going for a run) was their best way of dealing with stress:

- *'I punch a pillow as hard as I can, multiple times. It just releases the anger'*, boy 13
- *'I just go out to a boxing day'*, boy 14

Go with the flow

Some young people seemed able to draw on their own resources to manage their emotions or deal with stress, using phrases such as *'think positive'*, *'people should just relax and know everything will work out'* and *'go with the flow'* to describe what they considered to be a helpful approach:

- *'if someone is annoying you, let it go and look for something better… like a happier thought… or do something that makes you feel better… try to keep that happy sort of feeling and it makes everything easier as well, like if you are stressed about something, everything seems to go wrong* [and] *if you're not, you calm down'*, girl 17

Getting help

Lack of trust in professionals

The reservations that many young people expressed about encouraging friends to seek professional help, were based on lack of trust due to their own experience of talking to teachers or school counsellors about less serious – but troubling – personal problems.

They wanted to be able to trust teachers or counsellors – to know that what they said would be confidential:

- *'usually they bring in your parents or say "do you think you want to talk to your parents about this"? You're like, no, if I wanted to talk to my parents I would have talked to my parents'*, girl 15
- *'I talk to teachers at school but you kind of get sent from one teacher to another. I went to one teacher to talk to them and I ended up talking to a completely different teacher and I didn't really want to. This was about something that was happening out of school that was affecting my work in school'*, girl 15
- *'if it's really bad they'll think, oh we have to call the parents about this even if you ask them not to'*, girl 14
- *'they send you to someone else to talk to. It's just kind of like, I just told you that in confidence – you could help me. I don't really want to tell everyone about it. I don't want all the teachers to know what I'm upset about. Why do I have to keep going through all these teachers and telling them? It's kind of stupid'*, girl 14

Involving parents without their consent was seen as a breach of confidence. They felt let down and lost respect for the teacher or counsellor concerned. Being passed along from one teacher to another made them feel uncared for and think that the teacher was not competent and not able to help.

They didn't necessarily want advice but, if given, wanted it to be accurate:

- *'me personally – being a creative person – I prefer for people to give me ideas on things and then I can kind of sort it out myself. No one's really going to know my situation better than me, ever. I prefer for people to give me ideas, definitely'*, girl 15

Talking to a psychologist was viewed with suspicion: *'most people* [at school] *don't go to them because they don't like the idea of someone trying to get into their head'*:

- *'It depends if you need it or not, though. If you're going to it, then you'd probably call like a helpline or see someone else before you went to her'*, girl 15
- *'it still comes back to the trust issue – that we don't trust them'*, girl 15

Asking for help was difficult:

- *'I can't really call Kids' Helpline or talk to the chaplain or anything… can't bring myself to call them because there are a lot of other people who have worse problems than I do. I think if I talk to them, then some other kid will be on hold and they'll really need to talk to someone, and my problems aren't all that bad – but I'm stuck in my room crying all night'*, girl 15
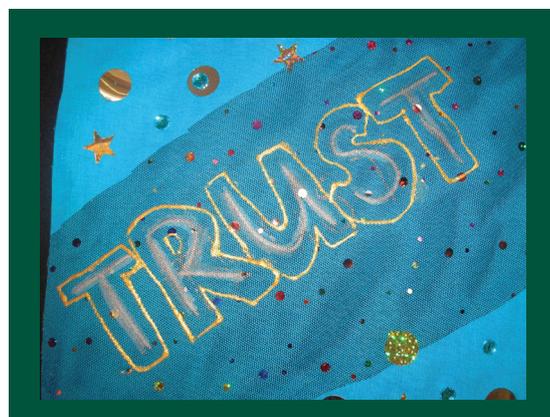
A trusted relationship

What they'd like is someone at school to talk to, because it's convenient and you can get to know them first in a group environment. You can just have conversations with them - someone you can trust not to '*blab*', who won't give advice unless you ask for it, who is young, like the trainee teachers they sometimes have.

Having an established relationship was said to be necessary before a young person has enough confidence to seek help:

- [I'd like] '*more trust between the teachers and the students because, I don't know about everyone else, but I don't feel I'd be able to go to a teacher with a problem because I don't know them well enough. I don't feel that they'd be able to help me fully enough*', boy 15

CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Children and young people showed a great deal of empathy and concern for others, both those they knew and those they didn't.

Worrying about friends and how to help them was raised in several groups involving 14–17-year-olds:

- '*sometimes if friends ask for your advice on something, it really gets you worried… it kind of brings you down for the rest of the week*', girl 15
- '*I hate all the bad things that happen to people, particularly girls that I know – because they tell me what has happened to them – and… I try to do something but there's nothing I can do because there's always something in the way of it*', girl 15

Young people said that friends had talked to them about self-harming, body-image issues, not eating, serious emotional abuse and suicidal thoughts. One girl said she knew girls who were depressed about their body-image. She related this to the way in which girls were depicted in the media and felt there was too much pressure on people to look glamorous.

Young people were very worried about their friends and wanted to help but sometimes came to realise that their friend needed more than they could provide. Some felt they understood what their friend was going through. In one group the discussion went like this:

- '*I can empathise, I really feel for those teenagers that have committed suicide*', boy 14
- '*because you can totally get where they're coming from*', girl 14
- '*emotional pain, it's not like a punch-up in the school courtyard or something, it's really quite complex*', boy 14
- '*it's like there's no medicine for it, you can't really treat it, it's not so easy*', girl 14
- '*but friends can't do anything about that*', girl 14
- '*I think with teenagers, like people who do have problems, friends matter so much to you in that time. I know with my group of friends, when I'm with them, that's the only time I actually feel comfortable, like I'm at home. So it's like my little escape. So I reckon I value that more than any psychologist or whatever*', girl 14

Young children spoke a lot about '*children in Africa*' and '*poor families*' where children did not have toys, food or a house. They saw themselves as fortunate and had many ideas for helping others, including sending money, chocolate, lollies and toys and some had taken part in fund-raising activities at their school. Suggestions of what could be done included donating old stuff that you don't need to charity and getting kids to safety:

- '*Maybe if the kids were in real danger then you would just take them someplace else and then, if they choose to, they can go back when the war is over. Because it would be a lot safer for them and when they're older, they will thank you for that because they wouldn't want to be there when the war's going on. It's just not nice*', girl 12

Young people spoke about third-world countries '*where they definitely need fixing, like food, water and education would be the main things*' and developing countries where there were people who '*are living below the benchmark and it's not fair for the kids*'.

A couple of groups mentioned Aboriginal communities that needed more resources like teachers, nurses and doctors:

- *'It's not like I'm an expert but you see the news and they have nothing. They don't have any books, they don't have any cooking utensils or anything… some basic living things can help and some stuff for the kids to do that's not self-defeating or anything like that',* girl 14
- *'If I was the Government of Australia I would help the Aboriginals up in the Kimberley… even … Northern Territory… like those places where they don't have as many things we do right here... I'm not sure how… I'm not sure what's going on there, but you hear on the news that some things are going wrong there',* girl 14

A group of young people in a regional area said that some kids in the cities needed more support and suggested that parents with little kids be paid more and work less so they could spend more time with their kids instead of putting them in day-care for long periods.

Additional concerns for other children related to bullying, child-abuse and the need for children to be listened to about these and other matters. It was said children were not listened to because adults thought it would just blow over:

- *'... oh, this is a little kid. What's he going to know…he doesn't know anything',* boy 12
- *'sometimes kids feel left out and they need someone to come up to them and say, "would you like to join in?"',* girl 12
- *'there's also some kids that have been teased or bullied at their previous schools and when they come to another school… they might not talk. They might stay away from everyone because they think it's going to happen to them again and they kind of shut everyone out. If you try and include them, they just don't want to',* girl 12
- *'maybe if kids do have a problem, they could sit down and talk to someone, instead of someone just saying, "oh, you'll be fine" and then letting them live with that their whole life',* boy 12

A 14-year-old who plans to be a foster parent when she is older was very concerned about the extent of drug use among children and young people and child abuse:

- *'I worry about how much illicit stuff is around* [drugs]. *I am worried about all the kids involved with that and their parents don't actually give a stuff. It makes me angry that parents smoke around the kids and I am worried for their health. I am worried about some foster parents – like, I know a lot of children have gone into care* [and been] *worse off than living with their own parents… it makes me really angry. They are, like, in their 20s now and have their own kids, but it tears a person apart to actually see them, the abuse that they had all their life and they abuse their children. A mum treats a child with anger and hate and then they have kids and they treat their child with anger and hate; that's just how it works. It makes me really angry.* [Kids need] *stable foster parents or parents and a good school and good friends, good influences. Mainly the parents' bit though. Really counts, that one.'*

Young people who had caring responsibilities for a family member with a severe disability or mental illness said they constantly worried about what would happen, now and in the future. Some worried that a parent would make another attempt to commit suicide and others worried about who would look after a brother or sister with disabilities when their parents died. For some, this affected their plans for the future including what kind of career they might pursue and whether they would be able to travel.

THE FUTURE

Almost all the participants had ideas about their desired future. Those who didn't, or hadn't thought much about it, were not too concerned, feeling that things would work out for them.

Children

Children tended to be clear and succinct about what they hoped for:

- *'well I hope some day I'll get a driver's licence and I'll have a lot of money and a helicopter',* boy 8 (with cerebral palsy)

A group of five 8- and 9-year-olds in Perth wanted to be a vet or teacher, a journalist, a rock star, a BMX rider and *'go to the army to ride in tanks and shoot people'.*

Non-Indigenous and Indigenous 10-year-olds in the Kimberley wanted to be authors, miners, a photographer, a race-car driver, a teacher, a policewoman, a policeman, a pilot, a model, an actor and an artist. Other Indigenous children wanted:

- *'a motorbike, a car, a good home with a wife and kids and a mansion',* boy 10
- *'to go back to my real family',* girl 10
- *'to have a normal life',* boy 10

For this boy, a normal life meant *'a career, doing something you like and are good at and no fighting'.*

Among a group of 12-year-old girls in Perth, hopes for the future included: *'that good friends will still be friends when we are old,* and; *'to be an athlete'* while other hopes centred on helping people: *'to have a good occupation and earn money to help my parents when they're older'; 'to work for world peace'; 'to save kids who need food in Africa';* and *'to work for a better, cleaner world'.*

Health issues, disabilities or family situations helped shaped the responses of some children and young people, such as the 11-year-old boy with a physical disability who was aiming to be a competitor in the Paralympics in Brazil in 2016:

- *'to see my real mum again',* girl 8
- *'to not have cerebral palsy… it is bad',* boy 10
- *'to be normal… and not be sad any more',* girl 14
- *'to be able to accept who I am with my* [health problem] *and I want people to not define me by it and I want them to see who I am, even though I am different; I want to be successful and have really good lifelong friends and just a general happy life',* girl 14

Young people

Some young people thought about their future in terms of a particular course of study and/or career, travel or a family while others were non-specific. The individual answers of the following group of 16-year-old boys and girls illustrates this:

- *'have a happy life; have a family; just hope everything flows smoothly; get into the uni course you want, to lead onto the right career; hope that if you do something wrong you can learn from it; enjoy it* [life] *but don't stuff it up; just get next year out of the way and then work hard at uni; finish my 10-year plan* [to go to uni in Perth, the US and work in Hong Kong], *travel around the world and see everything and do something to do with maths or science, or engineering; do physiotherapy or environmental science; do sports science or medicine'.*

In a similar vein, one of the boys in the South-West forum said he would like: *'a good life with good people around me'.* Others in the forum were hoping for *'a good job, a good house and a good girlfriend'* and *'a good house and car, and a good job, and make lots of friends'.*

A job that you enjoy

A recurring theme, across many groups, was that it does not matter what you do, but it is essential you enjoy it. Some said you must love it and, if you do, then you would do it well:

- *'a good job… that pays well and you don't have to stress about things; you just have a day job',* girl 12
- *'one that you enjoy doing, like maybe your hobby and you turn it into a job…you won't have to go to work thinking "oh I don't want to go to this job"',* girl 12
- *'good hours, not working late to like 8.30 and getting home at 9.00',* boy 12
- *'something I like doing, something with sport',* boy 15
- *'find something you enjoy doing and want to do – look forward to going to do it every day… know you're good at it',* boy 15

For some, the central idea here is to do a job in which they can help people:

- *'graduate high school with a good score, graduate a good university with a good score, get married and get a job doing something for other people…like help stop global warming but not in a stupid way… actually help',* girl 15
- *'get a job, be happy, have kids, go to uni and help other people be happy as well',* boy 15
- *'I want to be a doctor, I just want to help people and set up my own practice in the country and I'd be happy… rural people need a heck of a lot more help, cities are over supplied, country's not',* girl 16

Four of the seven geographically isolated young people planned to have jobs centred on doing things for others: *'becoming a remote areas music teacher, because music is important and helpful in children's lives'; 'becoming a psychologist, to help people sort out their problems so they can be happier'; 'helping people in the community, perhaps through music'; 'getting into the agriculture business and providing food for the world'.*

Several participants interviewed during the South-West Forum also hoped to have jobs where they could help others. A 17-year-old girl said she would like to *'live happy'*. For her, this meant being a teacher so that she could help children. She felt she could do this because she understood what it was to be in their shoes.

Experience life

There was a view among some young people that starting work means the end of a full and enjoyable life:

- *'[I want to] experience life rather than having a normal nine to five… I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do after school ends. I don't know whether I'm going to go to uni or TAFE or just get a job or something',* boy 16
- *'I know you can't escape the nine to five but I want to enjoy life. I don't want to be stuck nine to five and be ruled by my job. Catch up with my mates, do sports and photography and all that. I want to be able to do these things I really enjoy. I know the nine to five job is what funds those activities but I want to have time to do them',* boy 16
- *'I mean you have your gap year but I think it would be so much better if we could leave school and do something like travel because then you get life experience as well. You don't really get much chance to do that when you're in uni or once you've finished because you're in the workforce',* girl 16

Have a family

For some, this was part of a bigger plan but, for two girls, creating a happy home was central to their wishes:

- *'have a family with a mum and a dad and the children and stuff and – well, because not all families are together now because like divorce and death and stuff – I want to make sure all my sisters are good aunts and my parents are good grandparents… just make them feel like they're welcome, happy',* girl 15

Chapter 4: What We Found

A 14-year-old aimed to finish Year 12, get married at 20 and be a foster parent. Finishing Year 12 would be an achievement as most kids at her school leave at Year 10. As someone who is in foster care she felt she understood a lot:

- *'Because I had a struggling life through childhood, I just want to see kids actually make it with their life… and to have a childhood. I don't think they have a childhood so it will be good if I could be a support person to foster infants'.*

Be happy

The main ambition of many young people was to be happy:

- *'I want to be happy being me and not trying to be anyone else that anyone wants me to be',* girl 14
- *'if you have all your friends happy, you'll feel happy… but if I could have just one thing in life it would be to chase all my dreams down and just to be able to go sky-diving, go bungee jumping, see the aurora lights or something. All those sorts of stuff I've always wanted to do, it is possible to do it but I have to work to get there',* boy 16
- *'I just hope to be really happy when I'm older. I don't care if I don't have a lot of money, I just want to be happy',* girl 14
- *'just be wealthy and just be happy',* girl 15
- *'just happiness… get out and do stuff. Ever since before I can remember I've wanted to go snow-boarding or something but I can't, yeah I've never been anywhere. I don't care what I'll do as long as I can get funding or whatever, I'm going to do it… I don't care what I have to do to get there, but as long as I get there eventually',* boy 16
- *'just happiness, being a teenager is just so crap… you get to that point where it's too hard... and then your parents come in and say, "really, life's not that bad, it'll get better" and I'm just like, go away, don't tell me that crap',* girl 15
- *'just be happy and everyone around me happy, happy with my decisions',* boy 16
- *'be happy but you know you need the sad moments to make the happy moments better',* girl 14

Travel

When young people talked about wanting to travel they frequently used the phrase *'experience as much as I can'.* For some, the wish was as open as that but others had something specific in mind:

- *'travel everywhere… experience as much as I can… and I have this big thirst for knowledge and as much as I don't get time to read at the moment, once I do get time I would love to sit down and read history books just to know everything… I want to be an interior designer…and be happy… but be able to change it when I want… I'm undecided whether to have children or not, but if I do they're going to be boys 'cause I don't want to deal with girls… I also like having companionship as well, having a husband or a partner, someone long term, 'cause I'm not really good single. I'm terrible single, I go crazy when I'm single… there's lots of things that I want to do and I will fit them in, I will',* girl 17
- *'when I watch [bands] play in front of all these people, it makes me lose my breath, and I can imagine myself doing that, like I know it's a lot of hard work but then I think that that's something I'd love to do, like I could ditch everything right now if I met some people who wanted [a] serious band, just drop everything and write music, that would be a great thing to do. But that's why I want to go to America 'cause there are a lot more outlets to do it, more opportunities',* girl 17

Visual and performance arts

Some of the children and a few young people expressed a wish to be *'a celebrity'* or performance artist of some kind. In the main, these were dreams (*'you dream of being a rock star but don't actually think you will be'*) but many who talked this way had grounds for believing they could achieve their dreams and were already studying music, dance, acting or the visual arts:

- *'I want to be in Broadway because I do singing… that's what I always wanted to do… I know I have to get top marks in all of my music aspects just to get into a school that could teach me that',* boy 13

Several others hoped to get into WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts).

Young people in the Kimberley

Many of the Indigenous participants in the Kimberley said they wanted to finish their education and get a job and earn money so they could buy food, or a new car. A couple of girls aimed to live somewhere else because there wasn't much to do in their area: they wanted to get a job, earn money and move away from their town. A 14-year-old girl (who was learning to play guitar) planned to go to university to do sport or music and then join a band. Another 14-year-old wanted to be a midwife and return *'to small areas where they've got to travel out of town, like here for instance, and make up like a little shelter for people who are having babies and get more help in the area'*.

CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE LIFE EVENTS

Most children and young people were optimistic about fulfilling their hopes for the future, in terms of getting a good education, a job or career, travel and so on. When it came to other important aspects of their lives, however, young people felt they had little influence or control. All ages from 8 years and up raised environmental issues as matters of concern to them but, with a few exceptions, were unsure how they could help because of their age and the size of the problems.

Children were generally confident about achieving their ambitions and for the most part said that doing so was up to them, with the help of teachers and families. Even at the age of 8 or 9 some could identify what they needed to do. For example, an 8-year-old who wanted to be a vet or a teacher said she had to *'concentrate and pass* [exams]*'* and her 9-year-old classmate, who wanted to be a journalist, said she had to *'practise and research what you're doing to make sure you're doing it correct'*.

As noted earlier, Indigenous children had a particularly good understanding of the connection between a good education, a job and earning money. According to some 9- and 10-year-olds, you have to:

- *'work hard and achieve what you want in life'*, boy 10
- *'work hard until you get the right amount of money'*, boy 9
- *'it can only happen if you want it to happen and give it a try'*, boy 10

Another boy said he wanted to *'have a great life'* and knew that to do that he'd have to listen to the teacher, do all his chores and listen to his mum.

Young people

A lot of young people felt they were doing as much as they could to complete their education and go on to TAFE or university.

For some, achieving their aims was about attitude or mindset:

- *'it depends on the person and if they have enough confidence within themselves they can control their lives, if not, they go with the flow… you have to wait until you get to a certain point where it's like you're forced to make a decision and take control'*, girl 17
- *'you don't need to be really smart to be happy or have all this knowledge but I reckon you need the right attitude'*, boy 15
- [what helps] *'is just being open-minded and doing new stuff, accepting new ideas and having new friends'*, girl 15
- *'you can't really change things that have happened in the past and some people just keep on holding on to the past. I try and let go of the past… you just get on with your life'*, girl 14
- *'you don't want to be a control freak, 'cause then you'll be solely blamed if something goes wrong which is even worse. It's good to like just go with it and not worry about stuff, do your own thing. It's a good mind-set to be in, not to get too worried about what happens'*, girl 17
- [to get what I want] *'I need a good education, a good job, which is pretty much why I'm trying to try at school. Yeah I'm not trying at the moment because I can't be bothered but I've been told I need to, so I'm trying to try'*, boy 16

Lack of influence

Some young people felt their lives were mapped out for them and they had little capacity to influence or control what happens. They said parents control what they do, where they go and, at a time when young people are trying to figure out who they are, parents tell them this, too. Teachers control how they dress and when they have to do things.

In one group, young people mentioned that some courses they wanted to do would not be available next year, perhaps because not enough people were interested. This was perceived as another thing they were unable to influence or change.

There was resentment among some at having to choose courses when they were not ready, or did not want to at that time, and then having to select from within a range of courses pre-determined by the school:

- *'we're not legal to do anything until we're 18 so why do we have to choose our lives… why should we have to choose this now and… this isn't technically our lives, it's what our parents want us to do',* girl 15

For some, there was a contradiction in not being allowed to make decisions in small aspects of life but, at 14, having to decide on subject choices that *'are massive and going to decide your entire life'.*

Most wanted to exert more influence over their lives:

- *'[they]* tell us what to do, because they don't really think we can make our own decisions at such a young age… maybe they have to make decisions over really big things but we still want more control just for the small things', boy 14

Thinking further ahead

A few children said they worried about how they would ever be able to manage money matters when they were grown up:

- *'like how complicated all the bank stuff sounds and like all the mortgages and all the things you have to pay… and some families get stuck and then they get broke',* boy 12

The majority, however, had no real concerns and were confident about their lives proceeding along a satisfying path or said they did not give it much thought:

- *'maybe I might not have enough money or something to get into the agricultural school, then I could just probably… get a different job',* boy 10
- *'just live what you're living for now',* boy 12

Most young people did not think much past their immediate plans for jobs, further education, travel and so on. Some who did were concerned about whether there would be a job for them and whether it would last:

- *'… with things like government policies, what's going to happen – is my job going to be under threat, is there going to be any stable position for me to take? I don't want to go to uni and hop out and there's no jobs. I would be ready to kill. I want to be able to stay in a job for a few years. I may want to be in the same job for my whole life if I like it. I don't want to be in a job for three years out of uni and then screwed over and have to retrain for a lower job that I hate and I'm not being paid what I want to be paid. Because, pretty much, I'm going to have to earn double what my parents earn just to be able to live',* boy 16

Young people said they had no influence or control over some of the things that had the greatest impact on them, such as parents fighting or splitting up; illness in the family; how much attention your parents paid to you; abusive parents who were not fit to control your life; availability of good public transport; facilities and places for young people to hang out together; and decisions made by politicians (e.g. Youth Allowance, cost of university and TAFE courses).

Environmental issues

Children raised pollution and environmental issues more readily than young people and one group of 11–12-year-olds was particularly aware and informed.

Children were concerned about these issues but were not sure what they could do themselves to help, although one 10-year-old girl suggested *'making a big poster to stop people polluting the air and chopping down trees'* and some children had taken part in school-based activities. They wanted something done and had a few suggestions:

- *'tell the people cutting down trees to cut down one or two, enough for paper but not all the trees because that's how we breathe',* girl 9
- *'get off all the vandalism* [e.g. clean up broken glass, clean off graffiti]*',* boy 9
- *'have an invention that would suck up all the pollution',* boy 9
- *'when I go to school and come back I see a lot of rubbish on the fences and the other weekend I went fishing and there were all these fishing ropes stuck in the rocks and Coke bottles just sitting in the rocks',* boy 11
- *'maybe try and cut down global emissions. I know they're already trying but why don't we get rid all of the cars and melt them down and make conveyor belts all over the world',* girl 11
- *'stop the pollution in the air…* [and we] *should stop war because too many people die and they've got like these big bombs that poison the air',* boy 11
- *'just cut down on plastic bags – don't make any more – they'll just have to use paper bags',* girl 11

Children spoke about endangered species and saving whales – and they wanted action taken – but most did not feel they personally could do anything to help:

- *'make sanctuaries for all the endangered species… there's this pygmy possum and it's nearly extinct',* boy 11
- *'save whales, which are hunted illegally and sold just for money',* boy 12
- *'well sometimes you think you can change the world and that stuff but then realise you can't',* girl 12
- *'I don't think kids can do much because not heaps of people listen to them, or to people our age',* boy 12
- *'they all just think you're like a little child – you don't know anything – even though you watch the news and you understand all the problems',* girl 12

A few young people raised protection of the environment, global warming and world peace as serious issues where not enough was being done. In one group, this was said to be because the world's governments are run by elderly men who care only about what affects them right now. Younger leaders and more women were needed. Women were considered to be more in touch and better able to look at the bigger picture, not just money and economics.

'Climate change is an issue that is really considerable for us because it is actually going to affect our generation whereas it is older people who are making the decisions and they are the same people who have been making mistakes. I think that whole argument that it is economy versus environment is really false because you can have a green economy and you can make money and you can make jobs through new technology', girl 15

There was a widespread view among young people in the focus groups that *'people our age can't do anything about global warming – people stop caring because there's nothing you can do'*.

An exception to this was a girl who wanted a job where she could do something practical to contribute to a reduction in global warming.

Three 16-year-olds who took part in the photo activity focused on the built environment as a matter of concern to them and took shots illustrating this. Others raised the issue of global warming during the discussions, saying this is going to affect their lives and they wanted to be part of the generation that does something about these kinds of problems unlike *'the current generation'* of politicians who do nothing.

One boy took a set of six photographs on his normal route to and from school:

'It's a pretty bad reflection on society, the fact that we all left a trolley out there for one to three months and the fact we graffiti, the fact we leave that [plastic bag dangling from overhead wires] *there. I walk past this every day and I haven't done anything about it. Although I did take a photo, I still did nothing. It's bad on my behalf, me and everyone',* boy 16
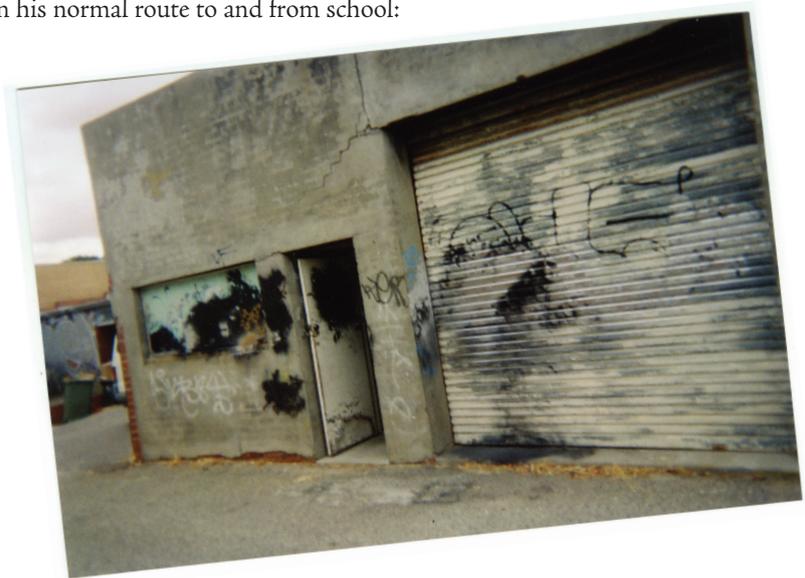
ROLE MODELS

The adults who young people most admired or saw as role models were described as *'real people in our lives'*:

- *'I'm following my dad's example – be kind to everyone, respect everyone – but I've got* [an ideal person] *that I want to be… kind, goes out helps everyone, smart, knows what he's doing and is fit as well',* boy 15
- *'I like… certain aspects of people… just normal people who do what they think is right. Just what they're doing can be really amazing and better than other people',* girl 15
- *'there's not so much people that I look up to but people that I would rather not be disappointed in me… I admire the things that some people do – like volunteers and people who work for human rights',* girl 15

A group of 14-year-olds said that they could admire a famous actress in the movies but their role models were people who surrounded them in everyday life (e.g. one boy's martial arts instructor).   One girl said her role model was God, because she was a Christian.

When participants in the Perth interactive forum were asked who they admired, the top two responses were *'friends'* and *'mum/dad/parents'*.

The main reasons for admiring friends were: they can be relied on; they support and encourage me; personality; enjoy their company; help you relax and have fun; easy to talk to.

The main reasons for admiring parents were: they care about me; support me; find time for me; provide for the family; want me to do well; have achieved a lot; make me feel I can do anything.

Celebrities

Children tended to have sports stars or celebrities as their heroes. When young people admired celebrities, it was generally because of characteristics they exhibited:

- *'I don't look up to celebrities but* [I like them] *because they're on TV… you see them all the time… they bring the fashions in',* girl 15
- *'I kind of look up to Beyonce in the fact that she has the discipline. Like, she doesn't swear… you don't want to be like them but you think "that's cool"',* girl 15
- *'I want to be an actress and famous – in Hollywood and that – so I'm interested in their lifestyles and how they do that sort of stuff',* girl 15

Some of the girls in the group quoted above were quite sceptical of this last statement, saying *'they always turn out to be druggies, though'*.

There was quite a lot of concern for people younger than themselves who were influenced by what they saw on TV or in magazines and the way in which this shaped their ideas about themselves:

- *'I also think it's really important for teenagers to accept themselves because with our generation we have all the celebrities and movie stars and they're all – oh they've got the newest dress or they look absolutely brilliant and they've got the makeup - and they're all so skinny and then kids try to be like them and I think it's really wrong - going anorexic just to be accepted',* girl 15
- *'I reckon it's sick that everyone looks up to people who have had so much Botox and plastic surgery',* girl 15

There was widespread agreement in groups where this issue arose that magazines cannot be relied on for useful or even honest information:

- *'we all know that's it's all edited anyway so there's really no point',* girl 15

IDEAS FOR MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people had plenty of ideas on what could be done to improve the lives of others their age. Some that have not yet been discussed are mentioned below, grouped by age. Many of the ideas were about improving the lives of others who were *'doing it tough'*.

8–10 years

- *'destroy poverty'*
- *'buy my own land and make everyone stay there if the don't have a house, like people staying on the road with their rugs and all'*
- *'make prices cheaper so people can afford to live somewhere and don't have to live on the streets'*
- *'make sick kids' lives better by doing what they want but they'd still have to go to school because you need an education'*
- *'give $50,000 to needy children'*
- *'get heaps of foster parents 'cause many kids are left in the orphanage… they don't have parents'*

11–12 years

- *'make children feel more important because even little kids need to be listened to'*
- *'give kids opportunities to do things they can't afford, like footy clinics'*
- *'encourage them to take up opportunities because they might not want to take risks'*
- *'give kids a second chance if they stuff up'*
- *'if a kid doesn't have a family and they're living on the street* [the government could] *help them out a bit… if it's a teenager living on the street, instead of putting him in gaol, send him to an orphanage or something'*
- *'more doctors to help sick people'*
- *'lots of space to play and stuff – it wouldn't be very fun growing up in a small house and not a very big back yard'*
- *'encourage everyone to go to school and get a good education'*
- *'make school more fun – sing a song and do the maths sums in that'*
- *'instead of being stuck in the classroom all day, doing work, and then homework, you could have some free time or go out and play sport or something'*

13 and over

- *'Have a big day dedicated just to children where they go to a theme park free so they can have one day where they feel special like Father's Day and Mother's Day; something that everyone supports and everyone knows about and it's huge'*
- *'the government could put a little bit more money towards* [public] *schools to enhance the equipment and all the facilities'*

SUMMARY OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In-depth qualitative research with 5–18-year-old Western Australians identified eight aspects of wellbeing they believed most important for children and young people. There was a high degree of consistency in the findings from 39 focus groups, a large interactive forum in Perth, a forum in the South-West, a mural activity, artwork and storytelling sessions and a photographic activity. Children and young people spoke about their experiences and ideas, what mattered to them, what they wanted for themselves and others their age, and what they hoped for in the future. They came from a mix of social and cultural backgrounds, in metropolitan, remote and regional areas.

According to those taking part in this research, all children and young people need a loving, supportive family. They also need good friends, fun and activity, to be safe, a good education, the basics (such as food, clothing, shelter and enough money to live), acknowledgement, and freedom and independence.

While each of these has been discussed separately in the report, as have other important themes emerging from the research, there are many overlapping areas.

A loving, supportive family

To children and young people, having a loving, supportive family means being able to come home, feel safe and have parents to whom you can talk and who will hear you out. Children and young people enjoyed doing things with their family – playing backyard cricket, fishing, swimming or having gatherings where the whole family comes together. Some parents are seen to expect a lot and their children don't want to disappoint them. Children and young people wanted their parents to be interested in them and to provide love and emotional support. They don't like family stress and conflict. Family conflict, and especially parents fighting, drinking and being abusive, scares children and young people.

Indigenous participants showed a lot of respect for their parents and did not criticise them the way many non-Indigenous children and young people did. When Indigenous children and young people talked about parents who did not take care of their children, letting them go hungry and unattended, they spoke bluntly but without pointing the finger at particular parents.

It was evident that the families of many Indigenous participants had been devastated by the loss of parents, uncles, aunties and young ones to suicide, car crashes and other causes of death. Several children had attended many family funerals. This made them feel sad and unsafe and they worried about losing more family members.

Good friends

According to children and young people, everyone needs friends to hang out with: good, fun days make life worth living. They delighted in having friends with whom to share good times and experience acceptance and support. Many young people considered that only friends could truly understand how they feel and they are the only ones they trusted to tell their problems to. Most but not all young people in this research had enough friends or were able to spend enough time with them.

Fun and activity

Most children enjoyed team games and sports but loved unstructured ways of having fun such as riding bikes and skateboards, kicking a ball around and playing on the playground. Children and young people in remote and regional areas seemed to have more freedom to explore and be active. Young people liked being active and getting out and socialising with friends but said there was a lack of places for them to hang out. Some linked this to young people getting into trouble: getting drunk, using drugs and causing damage to property and themselves.

Being safe

The majority of children and young people felt safe at home and many experienced the *'loving, supportive family'* they considered so important for a good life.

Children in the Kimberley used the word *'unsafe'* in several contexts, such as when describing how they felt when there was a funeral on: sad, unwell, upset and unsafe. As discussed earlier, Indigenous children and young people had suffered the loss of many family members. Feeling unsafe seemed to include lacking a sense of security as well as concern for personal safety.

This research indicates that a lot of bullying is going on, more in some places than others. It was familiar to all and often hurtful and distressing. Bullies were hated by children and young people, and some wanted them punished.

In Perth and the South-West, *'creepy'* people at bus and train stations scared young people and some said the streets were not always safe, either. Drugs and alcohol were said to be part of the problem. Being scared of using public transport closes down opportunities for socialising or getting to work and makes young people more reliant on their parents – just when they want more freedom and independence.

A good education

Everyone considered a good education to be really important. Achieving that was a struggle for some, including those with learning difficulties or spending long periods in hospital. Indigenous children aspired to go to school every day because they understood that this was the path to a job, earning their own money and being able to make choices about life.

School was described as where you saw your friends and escaped your family. Teachers could be loved or loathed and there was broad agreement that students' workloads could be more evenly distributed to make them easier to manage and reduce pressure.

The basics

Having basic needs met was something that most children and young people accepted as normal, but it was not so for all. Some Indigenous children described being hungry, sad, lonely and angry, and all Indigenous participants in this research had witnessed the problems caused by alcohol, including people who fight, mess up the house and leave them to clean it up.

Having at least some money to be able to socialise was important for young people, some of whom had part-time jobs to pay for this or contribute to the cost of text books, and some were concerned about the cost of further education. Attitudes to money and possessions varied but could be summed up as: money does not buy happiness but contributes to it.

Acknowledgement

Children and young people wanted the things that were important in their lives to be acknowledged by adults and the broader society. They also wanted to feel personally valued and appreciated, in particular by parents, friends and teachers. Being complimented or made to feel special when they had done something well was highly valued and being listened to, and having their ideas taken seriously, made them feel respected.

Indigenous children and young people wanted a strong culture and to have the positive things about their traditional values acknowledged and appreciated. They liked being with grandparents, listening to stories and learning about their culture.

Freedom and independence

Children related freedom to being able to get out and do things without having parents managing every aspect of their lives. Young people wanted freedom to make decisions and learn from their mistakes, but recognised they needed boundaries and guidelines. They placed a high value on being acknowledged when they did well and disliked being criticised.

Other findings

Stress came up repeatedly throughout the research, with differences in the way in which individuals responded to it. Many were highly disciplined and capable, as they juggled part-time jobs, sport, other interests and study, and seemed to have inner resources that helped them cope, but some young people appeared overwhelmed. They adopted a kind of gritted-teeth approach and said they just had to hang on or endure it until it was all over (i.e. Year 12 completed). There were a few boys, aged 15 and 16, who appeared to be feeling shattered and experiencing real pain as they battled on. Other boys and girls seemed to be on strike: disengaged, angry and resentful.

Children and young people mostly shared their worries and problems with family and friends and for many this worked well and was sufficient to deal with day-to-day knocks and setbacks, but some said they kept their problems to themselves. It was also evident that some did not trust teachers, counsellors or other professionals or saw their problems as not important enough to justify asking for their help. This can leave them and the friends they confide in feeling burdened and anxious.

Children and young people had plenty of ideas on what could be done to improve the lives of others their age. They were kind and compassionate in their concern for those whom they considered less fortunate than themselves, and many of their ideas for improvement focused on making life better for people who were doing it tough. Some young people, however, were tough on their own generation and held fears for those younger than themselves. One very clear message was that parents had a responsibility to care for and support their children.

In this research there was an interesting contrast between young people who acknowledged (in a tangential way) their own use of alcohol and their disparagement of others who did the same and who also used drugs. Children and young people were concerned about parents who spent money on alcohol and neglected their children, and adults who supplied alcohol and drugs to young people.

Children had a lot to say about the world beyond themselves. They expressed concerns about the natural environment, pollution and threatened species, amongst other issues. For the most part, young people were uncomfortable talking about these big issues, not because they did not care but because they wanted to make a distinction between things they may be able to influence and what seemed to be out of their control. There were a few exceptions to this and some well-informed young people could see a role for themselves in bringing about change.

When asked whom they most admired, almost all children and young people talked about people in their own everyday lives, in particular their friends and parents, because of the love and support these people give them. Even those children who admired celebrities and sports stars tended to admire them more for their personal attributes than for their celebrity status.

Overwhelmingly, young Western Australians had high expectations for the future and were optimistic and confident about achieving their aims.

Mural painted by recently arrived migrants, aged 6-12 years, living in Perth:

- A 6-year-old drew a picture of herself at school wearing a necklace: she was happy because she was playing with her friends and they were singing.

- A 7-year-old drew herself at home wearing *'a star and some happy clothes'*. To make other children feel happy, she would play with them. She said her favourite things were bananas, oranges and playing.

- A 9-year-old drew herself in her uniform at school: she was happy because she was at school, playing with her friends. She said that when she felt happy she told her teacher and her family. When she was sad she didn't always tell anyone but sometimes told her mum and dad.

- An 11-year-old drew a picture of himself at school: he was happy because his friends were together and were helping each other. He said that when he was happy he felt excited. To make other kids feel happy, he would play with them and talk to them. He liked eating his favourite food - rice and eggs. What he liked doing most was playing soccer, football, tennis and PlayStation.

- A 12-year-old drew herself *'wearing an orange dress with some little things in there with some stars… and I was wearing my hair-band'*. She was happy because *'it was the best day of my life* [because] *my mother buys me the orange dress'*. They had a good picnic and played games.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Online Survey

The "MyVoice" online survey for 10–17-year-olds was conducted over a 20-day period in December 2009. A copy of the survey, together with the results, is provided at Attachment 8.

A summary of the main findings is provided below.

The Participants

There were 582 participant[24]. Their demographic profile is summarised below.

- The majority of respondents were boys: 318 (54.6%) boys and 255 (43.8%) girls[25]
- The most common respondents were 13 or 14 years old: ages ranged 10–17 years (135 respondents were 10–12 years old, 282 were 13 or 14 years old, and 155 were 15–17 years)[26]
- The vast majority of respondents, 451 (77.5%), were from Perth, 36 (6.2%) were from the Mid West, 29 (5%) were from Peel, 26 (4.5%) were from Goldfields–Esperance, and the rest were from other regional areas or did not specify a region.
- 45 respondents (7.7%) indicated they had a disability (the most common disabilities were intellectual and physical)
- 37 respondents (6.36%) identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 25 respondents (4.3%) were in foster care.

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[24] There were 605 responses to the survey, but only 582 were useable. The remaining 23 comprised 12 blanks (where respondents entered the survey but did not answer any questions), 8 duplicates (where respondents competed the survey twice), and 3 who answered only the demographic questions.

[25] The remaining 1.6% of respondents did not respond to the question on gender.

[26] The remaining 1.5% of respondents did not respond to the question on age.

Chapter 4: What We Found

Life Satisfaction

The participants were asked to respond to a number of statements about their lives . Their responses are provided below.

Statements about Life (%)

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Nil response
I am happy with my life	72.0	9.3	18.4	0.3
I have to follow too many rules	40.0	41.4	17.9	0.7
I have enough time to do the things that interest me	63.2	22.3	13.1	1.4
I need more opportunity to work things out for myself	48.8	30.4	19.9	0.9
I have enough good friends	85.7	6.9	6.7	0.7
I think my parents expect too much of me	30.8	50.9	17.9	0.5
I can't do much to change my life	26.1	54.6	18.9	0.3
I go along with my friends in order to be popular	16.2	70.8	12.7	0.3
I would like to spend more time with my family	55.5	24.2	19.9	0.3
I have too much stress/worry in my life	36.6	42.6	19.8	1.0
I feel loved and cared for	78.5	10.0	11.0	0.5
I feel upset when my friends don't get along	55.3	26.1	17.7	0.9
If I work hard I will achieve my goals	78.7	9.5	10.8	1.0
I find peer group pressures difficult to resist	21.5	52.7	25.3	0.5
I feel that people listen to what I have to say	51.7	20.8	26.8	0.7
I have everything I really need	58.2	25.3	15.6	0.9
I get worried when my friends have problems	66.2	19.2	14.1	0.5
I feel I can make a difference in the world	48.6	24.9	25.6	0.9
I would like more say in decisions affecting my life	62.0	13.9	22.9	1.2

The above responses indicated that most of the children and young people who participated in the survey were happy, enjoyed good friendships, felt loved, and were optimistic about achieving their goals. The majority, however, wanted more say in decisions affecting their lives and would like to spend more time with their families. The majority also reported getting worried when their friends have problems and feeling upset when their friends don't get along. A significant minority felt they have to follow too many rules and wanted more opportunity to work things out for themselves. They were not convinced that people listen enough to what they have to say. Over one–third also felt they have too much stress or worry in their lives.

Support for dealing with problems

Some 60.3% of children and young people reported having someone to talk to about their problems or worries. Mostly, they talked to their parents or friends. A worrying 38.7% of respondents, however, said they did not have anyone to talk to or would prefer to keep their problems to themselves (9.1% and 29.6% respectively).

Bullying

The responses to the questions about bullying were concerning. The majority of respondents (60.8%) indicated that they had been bullied, and half of those had been bullied in the last year. Also, 44.3% of respondents stated that they had bullied someone else. One-third of the total sample indicated that they had been bullied themselves and had bullied someone else.

Public transport and safety

Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that they used public transport. Of those, nearly two-thirds said they always felt safe on public transport during the day, but only 21.3% said they always felt safe at night. Indeed, 39% of the children and young people who said they used public transport appeared to have used it only during the day (which was perhaps not surprising, given that nearly three quarters of the respondents were under 15 years of age).

Safety in different environments

Questions were asked about how safe the children and young people felt in different environments – at home, school, in the community, parties, sporting events and places where lots of young people gather. The place they felt safest was home (with 81.6% indicating they 'always feel safe' at home). The place they felt least safe was in the local community (with 42.4% of children and young people saying they often or sometimes felt scared in the community).

Feelings about home

Participants were asked "How do you feel about the home in which you live?" Nearly 57% said 'really good', 33% said 'good' and 9% said 'not so good'. The remaining 1% did not respond to the question.

Trust

Questions were asked about the levels of trust between adults and children/young people. The results indicated that the children and young people surveyed:

- had more trust in the adults they knew than in adults in general
- felt that the adults they knew had more trust in them than did adults in general
- thought that children and young people trusted adults more than adults trusted them.

Only 34% felt that adults in general had a lot of trust in children and young people.

Comments made by survey respondents

There were three open-ended questions in the survey:

1. What does "wellbeing mean to you?" (N.B. participants were told that "It is OK to say 'not sure' or 'don't know'")
2. What is the main thing in your life you would like to change?
3. What are the three best things about your life?

Less than half (49%) of the respondents answered the question "What does wellbeing mean to you?" The top five responses were:

1. Happy (29.4%)
2. Safety (15.9%)
3. Healthy (11.0%)
4. Physical and mental health (8.5%)
5. Being well (7.5%).

These responses suggest that the term 'wellbeing' does not enjoy a shared understanding amongst children and young people.

Some 78.7% of the respondents answered the question "What is the main thing in your life you would like to change?" The top six responses were:

1. Nothing (19.9%)
2. My behaviour (5.8%)
3. Everything (5.6%)
4. Where I live (5.0%)
5. Physical appearance (4.6%)
6. My attitude and personality (4.6%).

A small number of children and young people made concerning comments about their life experiences, outlook and mental health, including mention of sexual abuse and suicidal thoughts. These disclosures suggest that confidential surveys requiring only passive consent are useful in eliciting the views of vulnerable children and young people.

92.6% of the respondents answered the question "What are the three best things about your life?" The top five responses were:

1. Family (27.8%)
2. Friends (22.5%)
3. Sport (5.5%)
4. Other activities (5.2%)
5. Teacher/school (4.1%).

Diagrams depicting the broad range of responses to these three questions are provided at Attachment 8(d).

A 'General Comments' box was provided at the end of the survey for children and young people who had additional things to say. Only 10.7% did. Of those:

1. 37.1% said the survey was good and/or fun
2. 27.4% provided elaborations on their responses to survey questions and included comments such as 'I love my family' and 'I realise I have good friends', but did not reflect any major themes
3. 16.1% said the survey was not worth the time and effort
4. 8.1% suggested improvements to the survey
5. 6.5% made comments pertaining to the questions themselves (e.g. 'the questions were hard').

Variations between groups

To determine whether there were any significant attitudinal differences between the different groups of children and young people who completed the survey, the following breakdowns of the quantitative data were conducted:

*   boys/girls
*   country/city
*   primary school/high school
*   Indigenous/non-Indigenous.

The detailed results of these variations are found at Attachment 8(c).

What does the data tell us? Overall, the gender, location, ethnicity and age of the survey participants did not significantly affect their responses to many questions. However, there were some interesting differences that are worth noting. These are outlined below in three categories:

*   Small differences (a difference in responses between groups of over 5%, but less than 10%)
*   Medium differences (a difference in responses between groups of more than 10%, but less than 20%)
*   Large differences (a difference in responses between groups of more than 20%).

Differences Between Country and Metropolitan (City) (Sample size: Metro 451, country 115, no response 16)

SMALL DIFFERENCES (BETWEEN 5 AND 10%)	MEDIUM DIFFERENCES (OVER 10%, BUT LESS THAN 20%)	LARGE DIFFERENCES (OVER 20%)
A higher percentage of country than city children and young people: • are happy with their lives • feel they have enough time to do the things that interest • them • want to spend more time with their families • feel they can make a difference in the world • have someone they can talk to about their problems • talk to their teachers about their problems	A considerably higher percentage of country than city children and young people: • feel that people listen to what they say • believe they have everything they really need • talk to their aunties, uncles, grandparents, cousins and brothers and sisters about their problems	Nil
A higher percentage of city than country children and young people: • feel they have to follow too many rules • feel they have too much stress/worry in their lives • think that children and young people have a lot of trust in adults generally • talk to their friends about their problems • always feel safe in the local community	A considerably higher percentage of city than country children and young people: • would like more say in decisions affecting their lives	A far higher percentage of city than country children and young people think their parents expect too much of them

Differences Between Boys and Girls (Sample size: 318 boys, 255 girls, no response 9)

SMALL DIFFERENCES (BETWEEN 5 AND 10%)	MEDIUM DIFFERENCES (OVER 10%, BUT LESS THAN 20%)	LARGE DIFFERENCES (OVER 20%)
A higher percentage of boys than girls: • feel they have to follow too many rules • believe they have bullied someone else • always feel safe in the local community, at parties and gatherings, at sporting events, and in places where there are lots of young people	A considerably higher percentage of boys than girls: • feel safe using public transport at night • think adults in general have a lot of trust in children and young people	A far higher percentage of boys than girls feel safe when using public transport in the day
A higher percentage of girls than boys: • want to spend more time with their families • feel that people listen to what they say	A considerably higher percentage of girls than boys: • would like more say in decisions affecting their lives • have someone they can talk to about their problems • talk to their friends about their problems	A far higher percentage of girls than boys: • feel upset when their friends don't get along • get worried when their friends have problems

Differences Between Respondents of High School Age and Primary School Age
(Sample size: 131 primary, 426 secondary, no response/other 25)

SMALL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 5 AND 10%)	MEDIUM DIFFERENCES (OVER 10%, BUT LESS THAN 20%)	LARGE DIFFERENCES (OVER 20%)
A higher percentage of high school age respondents: - think their parents expect too much of them - feel that if they work hard they will achieve their goals - always feel safe in places where there are lots of young people - always feel safe on public transport at night	A considerably higher percentage of high school age respondents: - feel they have too many rules to follow - feel they have too much stress/ worry in their lives - would like more say in decisions affecting their lives - use public transport - feel safe at sporting events	Nil
A higher percentage of primary school age respondents: - are happy most of the time - feel they can't do much to change their lives - want to spend more time with their families - get worried when their friends have problems - talk to their mum or dad about their problems - think that the adults they know have a lot of trust in children and young people - think that adults in general have a lot of trust in children and young people	A considerably higher percentage of primary school age respondents: - go along with their friends in order to be popular - feel upset when their friends don't get along - feel they can make a difference in the world - talk to their aunties, uncles and grandparents about their problems - feel unsafe in the local community	A far higher percentage of primary school age respondents talk to their teachers about their problems

Differences Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Respondents (Sample size: The number of non-Indigenous respondents was 544. The number of Indigenous respondents was 37, which is a reasonable but not substantial sample size. Results should therefore be treated with some caution.)

SMALL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 5 AND 10%)	MEDIUM DIFFERENCES (OVER 10%, BUT LESS THAN 20%)	LARGE DIFFERENCES (OVER 20%)
A higher percentage of Indigenous than non-Indigenous children and young people: - feel they have to follow too many rules - feel they have enough time to do the things that interest them - would like to spend more time with their families - always feel safe in their local communities - feel really good about the homes in which they live - think adults generally have a lot of trust in children and young people	A considerably higher percentage of Indigenous than non-Indigenous children and young people: - find peer pressure difficult to resist - always feel safe on public transport at night - always feel safe in places where there are lots of young people - think children and young people have a lot of trust in adults generally	Nil
A higher percentage of non-Indigenous than Indigenous children and young people: - believe they have everything they really need - would like more say in decisions affecting their lives - reported bullying someone else	A considerably higher percentage of non-Indigenous than Indigenous children and young people: - feel loved and cared for - feel happy most of the time - feel upset when their friends don't get along - feel they have someone they can talk to about their problems or worries*	A far higher percentage of non-Indigenous than Indigenous children and young people: - get worried when their friends have problems - reported being bullied

* *While Indigenous children and young people were less likely than non-Indigenous children and young people to feel they had someone to talk to, those who did say they had someone to talk to were much more likely to talk to family (including extended family) and to teachers than were non-Indigenous children and young people. Conversely, they were less likely than non-Indigenous children and young people to talk to friends.*

SUMMARY OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

While the focus of this project was on the qualitative research, the online survey (the quantitative component) proved valuable. It enabled issues identified in the qualitative research to be tested and explored with many hundreds of children and young people. It also attracted a higher participation rate from boys than did the qualitative research and captured some vulnerable and disadvantaged children whose voices might not otherwise have been heard. The anonymous nature of the online survey and the fact that parental consent was not required are the most likely explanations for this.

The survey also confirmed several findings of the qualitative research – in particular:

- the importance of family and friends to children and young people;
- the generally optimistic and positive nature of children and young people;
- the high levels of satisfaction felt by children and young people with their homes, families and friends.

Despite this – and as demonstrated in both the survey and also the qualitative research – the majority of children and young people indicated they would like more say in decisions affecting their lives and would like to spend more time with their families. The majority also reported getting worried when their friends have problems and feeling upset when their friends don't get along. A significant minority felt they have to follow too many rules, want more opportunity to work things out for themselves, and were not convinced that people listen enough to what they have to say. Over one-third also felt they had too much stress or worry in their lives and a similar number said they kept their problems to themselves. Also of concern was the fact that well over half reported having been bullied (half of those in the last year).

The survey cross-tabulations indicated that there were few wildly divergent views between groups of children and young people – i.e. between girls and boys, city and country, primary and secondary, Indigenous and non-Indigenous – but there were certainly some distinctions that policy-makers might want to consider. These include, for example, the findings that:

- Indigenous survey participants felt less loved than non-Indigenous participants, and also found peer pressure more difficult to resist,
- most primary school age children and nearly half the girls of all ages reported feeling scared sometimes or often in the community, and
- two-thirds of high school age participants wanted more say in decisions affecting their lives.

The survey asked 'What does wellbeing mean to you?' Only half the children and young people responded to this question and those who did proposed many different ideas ('being happy' and 'safety' being the top two responses). This suggests that the term 'wellbeing' does not enjoy a shared understanding amongst the majority of children and young people.

This chapter summarises key findings from the qualitative and quantitative research. It also highlights significant issues raised by the research participants.

As mentioned at the outset, this research project focused on reporting the views of children and young people and excluded the identification of any implications and the making of recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

When children and young people are treated seriously and given the opportunity to raise matters of importance to them, they express their views willingly and often with a good deal of insight. They want to have a say in decisions that affect them. Participation in this research gave 959 of Western Australia's children and young people the opportunity to speak out on what they believe is important to their wellbeing.[27]

The majority of children and young people taking part in the research felt they had a pretty good life:

- most participants in the qualitative research indicated they had much of what they said was important for their wellbeing;
- 72% of respondents to the online survey agreed with the statement "I am happy with my life". Just over 9% disagreed with this statement and 18% indicated they were "not sure".

For the children and young people who participated in this research, the most important aspects of wellbeing were:

A loving, supportive family

Children and young people taking part in the qualitative research believed that everyone their age needs love, care, support and good parents. The majority enjoyed the warmth, acceptance and security that all wished for and needed. Many loved, admired and appreciated their parents and over three-quarters (78%) of respondents to the online survey reported feeling loved and cared for. Children and young people enjoyed being with their families and more than half (56%) would like to spend more time with them.

Children and young people said they didn't like family stress or conflict, especially when parents were drunk or fighting.

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[27] The research focused exclusively on the views of children and young people and does not report the things that parents and experts in health, education and other fields know and understand to be crucial to positive development.

Good friends

Children and young people delighted in having friends with whom to share good times, just playing or hanging out. They disliked it when their friends did not get along and over half (55%) of respondents to the online survey said this made them feel upset. Young people considered their friends to be an important source of support and understanding and the majority (86%) said they had enough good friends – a positive finding given the importance they attached to friendship and the understanding and support that came from good relationships with their peers. Many young people considered that only friends could truly understand how they felt and that friends were the only ones they trusted to tell their problems to.

Fun and activity

Most children enjoyed team games and sports but loved unstructured play. In remote and regional areas they seemed to have more freedom to explore and be active. Young people made the most of their opportunities to socialise and be active but said there were few facilities for them.

A lack of adequate, clean recreation facilities was frequently commented on in this research. Young people believed there was a clear association between boredom and bad behaviour, including property damage, getting drunk and using drugs. Children need space and freedom to enjoy spontaneous play and explore public space without adults. Dirty parks and unsafe play areas reduce opportunities for them to enjoy their childhood.

Being safe

The majority of children and young people felt safe and cared for at home. However, bullying emerged as a major concern in the qualitative research, more in some schools than in others, and was often said to be hurtful and distressing. This finding was corroborated by the online survey, with responses indicating that 61% of the children and young people had been bullied, half of these within the last year. One-third of the sample indicated they had both been bullied and bullied someone else.

Some young people also reported feeling scared at train and bus stations and in their neighbourhoods. Drugs and alcohol were said to be part of the problem. Being scared of public transport reduced opportunities for socialising or getting to work and made young people more reliant on their parents – just when they wanted more freedom and independence.

A good education

There was widespread agreement amongst children and young people that a good education is vital, but achieving it was a struggle for some, particularly Indigenous children in the Kimberley who aspired to go to school every day and understood how important this was for their future.

For most children and young people, school was the place where they could see their friends and for some it was where they could escape family problems. There was broad agreement amongst young people that school workloads could be more evenly distributed to make things more manageable and less pressured for them.

The basics

Most participants did not have to worry about having adequate food, clothing, shelter and money to live but some Indigenous children described being hungry and feeling sad, lonely and angry. Indigenous participants in this research had witnessed problems caused by alcohol, including people fighting and messing up houses, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in the Kimberley reported that children were being neglected.

Attitudes to money and possessions varied. Those who owned iPods, mobile phones or other such possessions enjoyed them without believing these were more important than good relationships, achieving the best results they can at school and getting out and about in the company of friends and family. Most agreed that money does not buy happiness but contributes to it.

Acknowledgement

Children and young people wanted acknowledgement of the things that were important to them including being personally valued and appreciated, especially by parents, friends and teachers. Children and young people wanted their parents to be proud of them and, when they were, they wanted to be told. They spoke of the need to feel special when they did well and said this boosted their belief in themselves.

Indigenous children and young people wanted a strong culture and to have the positive things about their traditional values acknowledged and appreciated.

Freedom and independence

Children wanted to be free to get out and do things without having parents managing every aspect of their lives. Many young people were satisfied with the amount of freedom they had and those who wanted more recognised they also needed guidelines and boundaries.

Survey responses indicated that 62% would like to have more say in decisions affecting their lives and about half were not convinced that people listened enough to what they said.

Some were pursuing their independence by taking part-time jobs to provide money for social activities and to contribute to the cost of their education.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Throughout the research, children and young people spoke of the things that contributed to, and detracted from, their wellbeing. Many of the significant detractors they identified such as bullying, family conflict, a lack of recreational facilities, and feeling unsafe in public places, have been discussed above in the context of the eight aspects of wellbeing. Some issues, however, were relevant to several aspects of wellbeing and are therefore discussed separately below.

Stress

Over one-third of respondents to the survey indicated they had too much stress or worry in their lives. Some participants in the qualitative research, particularly some who were academically talented, felt overwhelmed by their school workload and doubted their capacity to cope. In some cases, this was exacerbated by the demands of a part-time job. Young people felt more flexible school arrangements and better planning would help.

A different kind of stress was experienced by some Indigenous children who reported going hungry and being scared that members of their family might die. Several children said they had attended a lot of funerals and this made them feel sad and unsafe.

Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol and drugs are part of the lives of some children and young people through their own use and that of their friends, peers and parents. Some young people acknowledged their use of alcohol and at the same time were disparaging about others their age getting drunk and using drugs. Some also reported parents being drunk, abusive and violent.

In the Kimberley it was reported that adults provided children and young people with alcohol which was consumed to such an extent they passed out. A number of Indigenous children and young people said that parents spent all their money on alcohol and neglected their children.

Help seeking

Children and young people mostly shared their worries and problems with family and friends and for many this worked well and was sufficient to deal with day-to-day knocks and setbacks, but a significant minority said they kept their problems to themselves. It was also evident that some did not trust teachers, counsellors or other professionals or saw their problems as not important enough to justify asking for their help. This can leave them and the friends they confide in feeling burdened and anxious.

Banners produced by 24 Perth young people, depicting their views on what matters, what they want more of, and what they want less of.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The extent to which children and young people were interested in and concerned for others emerged strongly in this research. Even those experiencing hardship were concerned about other children and young people who they considered less fortunate than themselves. One very clear message was that parents had a responsibility to care for and support their children.

Children and young people were also interested in big issues such as pollution and climate change but most seemed unsure of what they could do to help because of their age and the size of the problems. There appears to be an opportunity to tap into this reservoir of concern for others and for the world so that children and young people are able to contribute their ideas, energy and goodwill.

When asked whom they most admired, almost all children and young people talked about people in their own everyday lives, in particular their friends and parents, because of the love and support they provide. Even those children who admired celebrities and sports stars tended to admire them more for their personal attributes than for their celebrity status.

Most children and young people who participated in this research had plans or dreams for the future and were confident about achieving their goals. On the whole, they were optimistic and many in this research were prepared to work hard to get what they wanted. They were forthright and positive in their views on what helps them live their lives to the full. What they want most is to enjoy their lives and to have the opportunity to live well.

Children and young people depend on the adults who make decisions affecting their lives to provide appropriate care and protection, be alert to their needs and interests and ensure they are able to reach their full potential. It is hoped that this research will help the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and all those responsible for this State's youngest and most vulnerable citizens, to promote and enhance their wellbeing.

Attachment 1: Profile of Research Participants

Below is a profile of the participants in both the qualitative and quantitative (online survey) components of the research.

GROUP	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH COMPONENT	QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT (ONLINE SURVEY)	TOTAL SAMPLE
Boys/girls	167 boys (44.3%) 210 girls (55.7%)	318 boys (54.6%) 255 girls (43.8%) *(9 participants in the online survey did not stipulate gender)*	485 boys (50.6%) 465 girls (48.5%) *(9 participants in the online survey did not stipulate gender)*
Perth vs regional/remote	188 Perth (49.9%) 189 regional/remote (50.1%)	451 Perth (77.5%) 131 regional/remote (22.5%)	639 Perth (66.6%) 320 regional/remote (33.4%)
Indigenous	56 (14.8%)	37 (6.4%)	93 (9.7%)
Disability	10 (2.6%)	45 (7.7%)	55 (5.7%)
In-care	12 (3.2%)	25 (4.3%)	37 (3.9%)
English as a Second Language (ESL)	15 (4.0%)	Not asked	15 (1.6%)
Learning difficulties	22 (5.8%)	Not asked	22 (2.3%)
Chronic health conditions	6 (1.6%)	Not asked	6 (0.6%)
Ages	44 in Pre-Prim/Year 1 (11.7%) 88 in Years 3-7 (23.3%) 245 in Years 8+ (65.0%)	135 in Years 5-7 (23.2%) 437 in Years 8+ (75.1%) *(10 participants in the online survey did not stipulate age/year group)*	44 in Pre-Prim/Year 1 (4.6%) 223 in Years 3-7 (23.2%) 682 in Years 8+ (71.1%)) *(10 participants in the online survey did not stipulate age/year group)*
Totals	**Total: 377 participants**	**Total: 582 participants**	**Total: 959 participants**

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Consent Form for Children

Side A: Parent/Guardian Consent

Please complete this form once you have read the attached information sheets for you and your child.

Are you happy for your child to talk to us? (please tick)

☐ YES

☐ NO

If you <u>are</u> happy for your child to be involved, we would like you to:
- Talk to your child to explain the project
- See if your child is happy to be involved and ask them to complete Side B of this form.

If you and your child both agree that he/she can take part in the research project please fill out the information below (please tick):

☐ I give permission for the child named below to take part in this research project.

☐ I have read and understand the Consent Information for Parents/Guardians and Consent Information for Children and Young People.

Name of child/young person (PLEASE PRINT)   Age   Male/Female

_____   ___   _____

Name of school (PLEASE PRINT)

_____   *PTO*

Name of parent/guardian (PLEASE PRINT)   Phone number

_____   _____

Parent/guardian signature   Date

_____   _____

<u>Side B: Child Consent</u> (the child fills out this part)

Please fill this out once you have read the information sheet for Children and Young People.

Are you happy to talk to us?

☐   YES   ☺

☐   NO   ☹

My name is (child to write own name, if possible*):

_____

<u>Parents/Guardians:</u> If it is not possible for your child to write their name, we will ask them for verbal permission on the day, before we start our group discussions. If they don't want to participate, we will respect their decision.

THANK YOU

Please return this form to your class teacher as soon as possible.

More information concerning this project may be obtained from:

Jan Saggers
Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions, PO Box 2047
Claremont North, WA 6910
Telephone: 9385 4934
Email: jan.saggers@optusnet.com.au

This research is being conducted for the Commissioner for Children and Young People, WA
by Nexus Strategic Solutions, Sankey Associates and the Child Study Centre,
University of Western Australia

ConsentFormPSchildren28/8/09.doc

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Side A: Consent Form for Young People (young person to complete)

Are you happy to talk to us? (please tick)

☐ YES

☐ NO

If you are happy to be involved, we would like you to:
- Talk to your parent/guardian about the project
- Ask them to read the Consent Information for Parents/Guardians (attached)
- Ask if they support your decision to be involved. If they don't, unfortunately you can't take part.

If you are happy to take part in the research project please fill out the information below:

☐   I agree to take part in this research project

☐   I have read and understand the Consent Information for Children and Young People

☐   My parent/guardian supports my decision and has signed Side B of this form

Name of young person (PLEASE PRINT)   Age   Male/Female

_____   ____   ____

Name of school/TAFE   (PLEASE PRINT)

_____

Signature   Date

_____   _____

Side B: Consent Form for Parent/Guardian

I support my child's decision to take part in this research project

☐   YES

☐   NO

(if you ticked 'NO' your child will not participate)

Name of parent/guardian (PLEASE PRINT)   Date

_____   _____

Parent/guardian signature   Phone number

_____   _____

THANK YOU. Please return this form to the class teacher as soon as possible.

More information about this project may be obtained from:

Jan Saggers
Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions, PO Box 2047
Claremont North, WA 6910
Telephone: 9385 4934
Email: jan.saggers@optusnet.com.au   ConsentFormYoungPeople28/8/09.doc

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'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Consent Information for Children and Young People

This is to help you decide if you want to take part in a research project. The project is about children and young people and what is important to YOU. The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants to find out what young Western Australians like about their lives and what would make things better, so that all children and young people feel good and are able to live their lives to the full.

The Commissioner's name is Michelle Scott. She has asked a team of researchers to talk with children and young people all over WA and tell her what they say. Then, she can help the Government and other organisations understand more about what children and young people need.

If you take part in the research project you will be helping the Commissioner do a good job for children, young people and families.

Do I have to take part in the research?
No, you don't. If you don't want to, that's OK. It's up to you.

If I take part what will I be asked to do?
A researcher will visit you at school (or TAFE) and will ask you some questions. You will be with others your age, including some friends if they also decide to take part. You will spend about half an hour or an hour with the researcher. Some children might do drawings or paintings to help explain their ideas. Young people will be talking in groups. In country locations, you and your group might go for a short walk with a researcher.

Will the researcher tell people what I say?
Yes, but he or she won't tell anyone that <u>you</u> said it. The researcher will not say "Bob said this…." Or "Sandra said that…." You can say what you want and no one will be told your name.

The only time the researcher would tell anyone what you said is if he or she was concerned about your safety. For example, if you said someone was hurting you the researcher would want to tell a person who could help you be safe.

What will happen to the information I give the researcher?
Your ideas, and the thoughts of all the other children and young people taking part in this research, will be put together into a written document for the Commissioner.

All the information collected in this research project will be used to help the Commissioner understand more about children and young people and what would make their lives better.

If I do a drawing or take a photograph will I get it back?
Yes, but the researchers might ask you later for your permission to put your drawing or photograph in their written document. If you agree, your drawing or photograph will appear with just your first name and age (e.g. Tom, aged 7) or just your gender and age (e.g. Boy, aged 7), depending on what you would prefer.

Will the researcher want to record what I say?
Yes. Usually the researcher will use a digital audio recorder for this but sometimes he or she will take hand-written notes. The recordings and notes are only for use in this project. They will be stored in a secure place for at least five years and then the notes will be destroyed and the recordings deleted.

Do I have to answer all the questions the researcher asks me?
No, you don't. The researcher doesn't want to make you feel uncomfortable. If you don't want to answer a question, that's OK. If you start talking to the researcher, then change your mind about taking part, that's OK too, but it might not be possible to delete the comments you've already made.

Who is doing the research?
A team of researchers from Nexus Strategic Solutions, Sankey Associates and the University of Western Australia.

If I want to ask any questions about the research project or I have any concerns, who can I contact?
You can telephone, send an email or write to:
>	Jan Saggers, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions
>	PO Box 2047, Claremont North, WA 6910
>	Telephone 9385 4934. Email: jan.saggers@optusnet.com.au

Concerns from Aboriginal participants can also be made to:
>	The Secretariat
>	WAAHIEC
>	Office of Aboriginal Health
>	189 Royal Street
>	East Perth WA 6004
>	Email: avril.lowenhoff@health.wa.gov.au
>	Phone: 9222 4222 **InfoSheetC&YP28/8/09**

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Consent Information for Parents/Guardians

This is to ask you and your child if your child can take part in a research project. The purpose of the research is for the Commissioner for Children and Young People to gain an understanding of what is important to children and young people for their overall wellbeing.

The research will be used by the Commissioner to help government and other organisations provide better services for children, young people and families in WA.

Please read this Consent Information and the Consent Information provided for your child, and ask any questions you may have before deciding to allow your son/daughter to take part in the research. If you and your child agree, please sign the attached Consent Form.

Does my child have to take part?
No. It's up to you and your child to decide what to do. If you do decide to allow your child to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time.

Who is the Commissioner for Children and Young People?
The Commissioner is Michelle Scott. She gives advice to the Government and other organisations on how they can improve the lives of Western Australian children and young people. To do this, she often asks children and young people, and their families, for their thoughts.

Who is doing the research?
A team of researchers from Nexus Strategic Solutions, Sankey Associates and the University of Western Australia.

If you have any questions about the research (either now or at any point during the project), please contact Jan Saggers, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions, PO Box 2047, Claremont North, WA 6910. Telephone 9385 4934. Email jan.saggers@optusnet.com.au

If my child takes part, what will he/she be asked to do?

A researcher will visit your child at school (or TAFE) and will interview him/her with others of the same age. Younger children will be in small groups of approximately 2-5 and may do activities such as art or storytelling to help explain their ideas. Older children and young people will be in discussion groups of roughly 8-10.

Will the interviews be recorded?

Usually a digital audio recorder will be used but sometimes hand-written notes will be taken. The recordings and notes are only for use in this project. They will be stored in a secure place for at least five years and then the notes will be destroyed and recordings deleted. Your child can withdraw from the interview at any time but it may not be possible to delete the comments he or she has already made.

Do the researchers have Working with Children Checks?

Yes. All the researchers who will be interviewing children have current Working with Children Checks.

Will my child's views be kept confidential?

Yes, except in the unlikely event that they tell the researcher something that indicates that their safety is at risk. If this happens, the researcher will talk to the school principal about it.

Will my child's name appear in any reports or documents?

No. Your child's views will be reported together with those of others taking part but he/she will not be identified. In a small number of cases, the first names of some children may be included in the report next to a drawing they have done (e.g. Tom, aged 7), but if we want to do that we would ask you and your child for permission in a special consent form.

Who has approved this research project and who do I contact if I have a concern or complaint about it?

This research project has been approved by the Department of Education and Training, the WA Aboriginal Health Information and Ethics Committee (WAAHIEC), and the Project Reference Group of the Commissioner for Children and Young People

If you have a concern about the project or wish to make a complaint, please contact Ms Jan Saggers (details above) or, in the case of Aboriginal participants you may prefer to contact:

> The Secretariat
> WAAHIEC
> Office of Aboriginal Health
> 189 Royal Street
> East Perth WA 6004
> Email: avril.lowenhoff@health.wa.gov.au
> Phone: 9222 4222

Action requested

If you agree to your child taking part in the research, please sign the attached Consent Form and ask your child to sign and return the Form to school/TAFE as soon as possible. Please keep this Information Consent sheet for future reference.

Thank you for reading this information.   IinfoSheetP&Gs28/8/09.doc

Attachment 3: Testing processes for the qualitative and quantitative research questions

In designing the research questions for the project, the input of children and young people was critical. It was important that the intent of the questions was very clear to the children and young people and that the language used was appropriate. This presented a particular challenge, given that the research covered a wide age range of participants, 5–18 years and also a wide range of socio-economic and cultural participants, from Indigenous students in the Kimberley and newly arrived migrants in the city to the children of farming families in the South-West. The testing arrangements needed to reflect this diversity.

Testing of the research questions for the qualitative component of the research involved over 114 children and young people[1]. They came from The University of Western Australia's Child Study Centre, an inner-city primary school, a primary school in the Kimberley, a district high school in the Kimberley, and high school students from Perth and the South-West. Feedback from the testing process indicated that the children and young people found research questions easy to understand and that the questions elicited the information required to meet the research aims of the project. Nonetheless, the feedback did result in some minor changes being made to both the language and tense of the questions and also to the order in which the questions were asked.

To test the online survey for the quantitative component of the research, students from three schools (a primary school in a high socio-economic area of Perth, a senior high school in the outer suburbs of Perth, and a district high school in the Kimberley) were asked to 'test drive' the survey online and to answer some questions about the survey. A total of 84 students participated. The testing revealed that the survey was easy to answer and took only a short time to complete. Only minor modifications and additions were therefore made to the survey.

<u>Qualitative Testing Procedures</u>

Testing of the research questions for the qualitative component of the research (the discussion groups, etc.) was approached in the following way:

- To test the appropriateness of the proposed research questions and artwork/storytelling approach for younger children (pre-school to Year 2), the Director of the Child Study Centre at The University of Western Australia (and member of our project team) applied artwork and storytelling activities with four students aged five years from the Centre. She found that the children related easily to the exercise. They had no difficulty drawing happy or sad faces, recognising basic emotions in pictures, or in indicating what made them feel happy or sad in different contexts (e.g. happy at home, happy at school, sad at home, and sad at school).

- An inner city Perth primary school was chosen to participate in the testing process, owing to its wide socio-economic/cultural student population. Two researchers ran three discussion groups at the school, for a total of 27 students (16 girls and 11 boys) from Year 3 to Year 7. One of the researchers explained the purpose of the research and of the testing, and asked all the proposed research questions. They noted whether the children seemed to understand the questions and how they responded. They also specifically asked the children whether the questions were hard or easy to answer and whether we should change any of them or ask them differently.

- A primary school in the Kimberley was asked to assist with the testing process because of its high Indigenous enrolment. A lower primary and an upper primary school teacher were given information about the project and asked to run discussion groups with their classes, using the proposed research questions. The school provided a summary of the children's

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[1] The precise number of participants in the testing process for the qualitative research questions is not known as one of the teachers who conducted the testing did not record how many children were present.

responses, noting whether the students understood each question, what sort of things the students said in response to the questions, and some general comments (e.g. suggestions for re-wording the questions, any difficulties the children had in answering them, anything the children liked about the questions etc).

- Students in a district high school in the Kimberley were also asked to help with the testing process, owing to the school's high Indigenous enrolment. The approach outlined above for the primary school in the Kimberley was also applied at the district high school. A total of 74 students participated. 23 were boys, 27 were girls, and the gender of the remaining 24 was not specified. 20 were from Years 8–10, 46 were from the primary school, and the year levels of the remaining eight were not specified.

- A further nine high school students from Years 8–12 (5 girls and 4 boys from Perth and the South-West) were provided with hard copies of each research question and asked three things in relation to each question. 1. Did you understand this question? 2. Please make a few notes here of the sorts of things you might say when answering this question 3. Any general comments (e.g. suggestions for re-wording the question, any difficulties you think other children and young people might have answering it?).

Feedback obtained through the testing process indicated that the children and young people found research questions easy to understand and that questions elicited the information required to meet the research aims of the project. Nonetheless, the feedback did result in some minor changes being made to the language and tense of the questions and also to the order in which the questions were asked.

Quantitative (Online Survey) Testing Procedures

To test the online survey, students from three schools (Swanbourne Primary School, Ocean Reef Senior High School, and Halls Creek District High School) were asked to 'test drive' the survey online and to answer a series of questions about the survey. Those questions were:

1. Are the questions easy to understand?   YES   NO
    (if not, please suggest some different wording)

2. Is the questionnaire easy to complete?   YES   NO
    (if not, please suggest what would make it easier, e.g. better instructions)

3. How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?
    - Less than 10 minutes
    - 10–15 minutes
    - More than 15 minutes

4. If you have other comments to make, please type them here.

84 children and young people completed the online test survey. Of those:

- 55 were boys, 28 were girls, and 1 did not specify gender
- 67 were from Perth, 12 from the Kimberley, 2 from Peel, 1 from the Pilbara, 1 from the South-West, and 1 did not specify a region
- 22 were in Years 5–7 and 62 were in Years 8–12 or at TAFE, university, employed or did not specify their year level
- 9 identified themselves as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The testing revealed that the survey was easy to answer and took only a short time to complete. Only minor modifications and additions were therefore made to the survey.

Attachment 4: Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide: Artwork and Storytelling (Pre-Primary – Year 2)

The 'open' and 'close' to the discussion groups has been written on the assumption that the preliminaries have been managed: all participants have given their consent and are there with the consent of their parents/guardians; the researcher has checked participants against the list provided and therefore knows who is in the group and what the basic demographics are.

Set up the space to work, with art materials and decide where to take each child to record their story. Ask teacher to recommend whether the children call you by your first name or Mrs/Ms/Mr ………………… and whether the children should do painting or drawing.

OPEN
Turn recorder ON
Researcher welcomes the children and introduces self:
"My name is Jan and I'm very happy to be visiting you in your classroom"
Voice recognition: *"Can everyone tell me your name and how old you are?"*

"This is my recorder… it helps me to remember all the things we're going to talk about"

Tell them what you are doing:
"I would really like your help today. I want to find out what are some things that make children feel happy and also what things makes children feel sad. You can start helping me by thinking about some things that make you feel happy."

Conduct a brain-storm session on feeling happy: what are you doing? who is with you? how do you feel inside? (Try to get the children thinking about other parts of their life as well as school, if this is where they focus).

Set the first task:
"I wonder what you look like when you are happy – paint a picture of you, being happy"
Take each child aside and ask them to talk about their picture
Q1: *"This is a very happy picture… tell me all about it"* (use prompts like: who is this? what's happening over here? where are you? what else do you do that makes you feel happy?)

Conduct a brain-storm session on feeling sad: what makes you feel sad? when do you feel sad? who makes you feel sad? how do you feel inside when you are sad?

Set the second task:
"I wonder what you look like when you feel sad - Paint a picture of you, when you are feeling sad"
Take each child aside and ask them to talk about their picture
Q2*: "Is this you with a sad face?... tell me about your picture"* (use prompts like: what are you doing in the picture? where is this? who is this? when you're sad, what makes you feel better?)

End up with everyone sharing a happy experience:
"Now, let's talk about your happy times… who can tell me about a time when you felt really good?"
Make sure everyone gets to tell a happy story.

CLOSE
"Thank you for doing such good paintings and having such good ideas. You've all been really helpful.
I'm going to talk to some more children, at other schools, and I hope they will be as helpful as you.
Then, I'm going to write down everyone's ideas and give them to this lady (show a picture of Michelle Scott). Her name is Michelle Scott and she's called the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Her job is to help make sure children have lots of happy times."

"Does anyone want to ask me a question, before I go?"

"OK – thanks again. It was really good being here in your class room today."

Turn recorder OFF

Discussion Guide: **Discussion Groups (Years 3–7)**

The 'open' and 'close' to the discussion groups has been written on the assumption that the preliminaries have been managed: all participants have given their consent and are there with the consent of their parents/guardians; the researcher has checked participants against the list provided and therefore knows who is in the group and what the basic demographics are.

OPEN
Turn recorder ON
Researcher welcomes the children and introduces self:
"My name's Jan, and I'm really glad you've come to help me today".

Tell them what you are doing:
"I'm talking to children your age, and a bit older, to find out what is important to you. The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants to find out what young Western Australians like about their lives and what would make things better, so that all children and young people feel good and are able to live their lives to the full.

The Commissioner's name is Michelle Scott (show photo). She has asked a team of people, including me, to talk with children and young people all over WA and tell her what they say. Then, she can help the Government and other organisations understand more about what children and young people need.

This is my recorder. You might remember that we said we'd be recording the discussions, in the Consent Information sent home with you. I need to record our discussion today because I can't write fast enough to take good notes and I don't want to miss anything you say."

Voice recognition: *"Can everyone tell me your name and how old you are?"*

"Thanks. Does anyone want to ask me a question before we go on?"

"OK.

I've got a few questions for you, but they're not the sort of questions that have right or wrong answers – this is about you, and how you think and feel. I want to hear about all the different parts of your life – not just school, even though that's where we are at the moment. I'd like to hear about your whole life.

Does that sound OK? Any questions, so far?"

"You might all have different ideas about what's important, and what is not, so it would be good to hear from all of you.
If one of my questions makes you feel uncomfortable and you really don't want to answer, that's absolutely fine…just tell me and I can move onto a different question."

Try again to get them to ask you some questions:
"Would you like to know how many children and young people are talking to us?"
"Do you think it's important for people your age to be asked for your ideas?"
"Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

START THE DISCUSSION

Q1:   If you were having a really good day, what would you be doing?
       Prompt: Who would be there?
                         Where would you be?
                         How would you feel?
                         What's special or important to you about that?
                         What else could you be doing on a really good day?
                         Do you have many really good days like that?

       N.B. If kids struggle to answer this question, ask them if they can remember an actual good day.

Q2:   Thinking about other kids your age – what do you think <u>they</u> reckon is a really good day?
       Prompt: Why is that good?
                         How does it make kids feel?
                         What is really important to them?
                         What stops them doing the important things?
                         What do kids want to do more of?
                         What would be the top 3 three things?

Q3:   If you were having a day that <u>wasn't</u> good, what would be happening?
       Prompt: What's tough about that? (for older children) or
                         What wouldn't you like about that? (for younger children)
                         How would it make you feel?
                         Does that happen very often?
                         Do you worry about that happening?
                         Who can you talk to about that?

Q4:   What do you think other kids your age reckon is a bad day?
       Prompt: Does that happen much?
                         How does it make kids feel?
                         Do they worry about that?
                         Is it a big worry, or a smaller worry?
                         Do they think they could change that?
                         Who could help change that?

Q5:   Now, coming back to you, what do you wish for or hope for in your life?
       Prompt: How would that make you feel?
                         Who would you tell about it?
                         Do you think it could happen?
                         What could you do to make it happen?
                         What could adults or the government do to make it happen?

Q6:   Is there anything that bothers you - either now or about the future?
       Prompt: Why do you think that could happen?
                         Who says it could happen?
                         Who can you talk to about that?
                         Is there something that could be done about it?
                         Who could do that?

Q7:   What do you think all children need to have a good childhood? *(NB.let participants know that childhood covers the ages of 0-17)*
       Prompt: Why are those things important?
                         Do you think <u>you</u> have those things?
                         Do you think most <u>other</u> children (and/or young people, depending on age) have those things?
                         Can children (and/or young people) do anything to make those things happen more?
                         Can adults or governments do anything to make those things happen more?

Q.8   If you were boss of the world and had the power to do one thing to help other kids have a good life, what would that be?
       Prompt: Why would kids like that?
                      Would grown-ups like it?
                      What would kids say to each other about it?
                      What would you say to (mum, brother….whom ever was an important person to that child) about it?

CLOSE
"Thank you, everyone. You've been really helpful and have come up with so many good thoughts and ideas. It's been great listening to you.

It's really important that children speak out about what's important to you.

Does anyone have any more comments, or suggestions?"

Give a book-mark to each participant, as a 'thank you'.

"Thanks again, it's been great meeting you."

Turn recorder OFF

Discussion Guide: Discussion Groups (Years 8–12)

The 'open' and 'close' to the discussion groups has been written on the assumption that the preliminaries have been managed: all participants have given their consent and are there with the consent of their parents/guardians; the researcher has checked participants against the list provided and therefore knows who is in the group and what the basic demographics are.

OPEN
Turn recorder ON
Researcher welcomes the young people and introduces self:
"My name's Jan, and I'm really glad you've come to take part in this research".

Tell them what you are doing:
"I'm talking to young people, like you, to find out what is important to you. The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants to find out what young Western Australians like about their lives and what would make things better, so that all children and young people feel good and are able to live their lives to the full.

The Commissioner's name is Michelle Scott. She has asked a team of researchers, including me, to talk with children and young people all over WA and tell her what they say. Then, she can help the Government and other organisations understand more about what children and young people need.

This is my recorder. You might remember that we said we'd be recording the discussions, in the Consent Information sent home with you. I need to record our discussion today because I can't write fast enough to take good notes and I don't want to miss anything you say."

Voice recognition: *"Can everyone tell me your name and how old you are?"*

"Thanks. Does anyone want to ask me a question before we go on?"

"OK.

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I've got a few questions for you, but they're not the sort of questions that have right or wrong answers – this is about you, and how you think and feel. I want to hear about all the different parts of your life – not just school, even though that's where we are at the moment. I'd like to hear about your whole life.

Does that sound OK? Any questions, so far?"

"You might all have different ideas about what's important, and what is not, so it would be good to hear from all of you.
If one of my questions makes you feel uncomfortable and you really don't want to answer, that's absolutely fine…just tell me and I can move onto a different question."

Try again to get them to ask you some questions:
"Would you like to know how many children and young people are taking part in the research?"
"Do you think it's important for people your age to be asked for your ideas?"
"Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

START THE DISCUSSION

Q1:   If you were having a really good day, what would you be doing?
        Prompt: Who would be there?
                         Where would you be?
                         How would you feel?
                         What's special or important to you about that?
                         What else could you be doing on a really good day?
                         Do you have many really good days like that?

        N.B. If kids struggle to answer this question, ask them if they can remember an actual good day.

Q2:   Thinking about other kids your age – what do you think <u>they</u> reckon is a really good day?
        Prompt: Why is that good?
                         How does it make kids feel?
                         What is really important to them?
                         What stops them doing the important things?
                         What do kids want to do more of?
                         What would be the top 3 three things?

Q3:   If you were having a day that <u>wasn't</u> good, what would be happening?
        Prompt: What's tough about that? (for older children) or
                         What wouldn't you like about that? (for younger children)
                         How would it make you feel?
                         Does that happen very often?
                         Do you worry about that happening?
                         Who can you talk to about that?

Q4:   What do you think other kids your age reckon is a bad day?
        Prompt: Does that happen much?
                         How does it make kids feel?
                         Do they worry about that?
                         Is it a big worry, or a smaller worry?
                         Do they think they could change that?
                         Who could help change that?

Q5:   Now, coming back to you, what do you wish for or hope for in your life?
        Prompt: How would that make you feel?
                         Who would you tell about it?
                         Do you think it could happen?
                         What could you do to make it happen?
                         What could adults or the government do to make it happen?

Q6:   Is there anything that bothers you - either now or about the future?
        Prompt: Why do you think that could happen?
                        Who says it could happen?
                        Who can you talk to about that?
                        Is there something that could be done about it?
                        Who could do that?

Q7:   What do you think all children need to have a good childhood? *(N.B. let participants know that childhood covers the ages of 0-17)*
        Prompt: Why are those things important?
                        Do you think you have those things?
                        Do you think most other children (and/or young people, depending on age) have those things?
                        Can children (and/or young people) do anything to make those things happen more?
                        Can adults or governments do anything to make those things happen more?

Q.8   If you were boss of the world and had the power to do one thing to help other kids have a good life, what would that be?
        Prompt: Why would kids like that?
                        Would grown-ups like it?
                        What would kids say to each other about it?
                        What would you say to (mum, brother... whom ever was an important person to that child) about it?

CLOSE
"Thank you, everyone. You've been really helpful and have come up with so many good thoughts and ideas. It's been great listening to you.

It's really important that young people speak out about what's important to you.

Does anyone have any more comments, or suggestions?"

Give a book-mark to each participant, as a 'thank you'.
Draw attention to the back of the book-mark and the details about the online survey. Ask them to complete the survey, and also tell their friends about it.

"Thanks again, it's been great meeting you."

Turn recorder OFF

Discussion Guide: Mural Activity with Children at an Intensive English Centre Attached to a Primary School in Suburban Perth

INTRODUCTION   10 mins (1.10-1.15)

Turn recorder ON

Researcher welcomes the children and introduces self:

My name is Jan and I'm very happy to be visiting your school today.
Thank teachers for their help
Introduce researchers and art teacher

We would really like you to help us. We are talking to lots of children because we want to find out what makes children feel happy, what makes children feel sad and what would make things better.

First, we are going to do some talking; then we are going to ask you to paint a picture of you (your face) and Anne is going to help you make a mural (a big wall-hanging of all your paintings) that will be hung in here at school, for all the students, teachers and parents to see.

The mural is a way of telling a story about you.

After you've done your painting, we are going to talk to you about your picture.

But first we're going to get into three groups and have a quick talk about the things you like and things you don't like.

GROUP DISCUSSION 15 mins (1.15-1.30)

Get them into 3 groups (each led by a researcher)

You can start helping me by thinking about some things that you like doing – things that make you feel happy.

1. *What things can you think of?* (Try to get everyone to say at least one thing)
2. *Can you tell me two things you like to do when are not at school?*
3. *When was the last time you felt very, very happy?*
   Prompt: Where were you?
                      What were you doing?
                      Who was with you?
                      How did you feel, on the inside?
                      How did you look, on the outside?

Now, we are going to think about some things that make children feel sad or unhappy:

1. *What makes children feel sad?*
2. *Do you ever feel sad or unhappy?*
3. *I wonder what is happening when you feel sad….*
   Prompt: Where are you?
                      Who is with you?
                      Why does it make you feel sad?
                      How does it make you feel, on the inside?
                      How does it make you look, on the outside?

Get them back into one group.

ACTIVITY (30–40 mins, depending on age… younger children will finish faster so the story-capture can start – 1.30-2.10)

Anne explains the activity (i.e. that they will be asked to draw their face – happy, sad or however they feel on their own piece of fabric).

Anne explains what things they have to work with (paints, fabric, etc). She will also give them some tips about the activity (e.g. draw a large face that fills the page, make use different paints and fabrics etc etc.)

Show them an example of a face painting (N.B. One of my kids has offered to do one over the weekend that we can show them.)

Tell them we will be there to help them and encourage them to ask for help if they'd like it.

RECORDING STORIES

As each child finishes, record their story about their artwork (starting around 2pm)

I wonder what is happening in your picture…can you tell me?
Use prompts like:
- *Who is this?*
- *Where are you?*
- *What are you wearing/doing?*
- *What happened to make you look happy (or sad)?*
- *How do you feel, on the inside, in this picture?*
- *If you were talking to your friends about this picture, what would you tell them?*
- *What would your friends say to you?*

(Move the discussion away from the artwork)

If you were very happy (or very sad) who would you talk to?
Do you often feel very happy (or very sad)?
Can you remember the last time you felt very happy (or very sad)?

When you feel happy, who do you tell?
When you feel sad, who do you tell?
When you feel sad, is there anything you can do to make yourself feel better?

If you could help other children be happy and have a good life, what would you do?
- *Why would children like that?*
- *Would grown-ups like it?*
- *What would children say to each other about it?*
- *What would be the top 3 things you would do?*

What do children need to be happy?
Do you think you have those things?
Do you think most other children have those things?

Finish recording stories around 2.30

CLOSE 2.30-2.45

Explain what will happen to the mural and when it will be returned to the school

Thank the children – ask if anyone has any questions

Thanks again, congratulate individual children on their work.

Turn recorder OFF

Discussion Guide: Future Possibilities Youth Forum, Bunbury

Respondents are most likely to be in small groups; the discussion should last no longer than 20 minutes (so that respondents have time to go and get a drink, etc).

First, check that each respondent has a Consent Form signed on both sides, i.e. by the young person and their parent/guardian. We must not interview anyone without a signed Consent Form.

OPEN
Turn recorder ON
Researcher welcomes the young people and introduces self:
"My name's Jan, and I'm really glad you've come to take part in this research".

Tell them what you are doing:
"I'm talking to young people, like you, to find out what is important to you. The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants to find out what young Western Australians like about their lives and what would make things better, so that all children and young people feel good and are able to live their lives to the full.

This is my recorder. You might remember that we said we'd be recording the discussions, in the Consent Information sent home with you. I need to record our discussion today because I can't write fast enough to take good notes and I don't want to miss anything you say."

Voice recognition: "Can everyone say a few words, one at a time….tell me your first name and what school you go to"

"Thanks. Does anyone want to ask me a question before we go on?"

"OK.

I've got a few questions for you, but they're not the sort of questions that have right or wrong answers – this is about you, and how <u>you</u> think and feel. I want to hear about all the different parts of your life – not just school, or what you are doing at the Forum today. I'd like to hear about <u>your whole life</u>.

Does that sound OK?
If one of my questions makes you feel uncomfortable and you really don't want to answer, that's absolutely fine…just tell me and I can move onto a different question."

START THE DISCUSSION

Q1:   What do you wish for (or hope for) in your life, both now and in the future?
        Prompt: what would be the top 3 things, now?
                       what's special or important about those things?
                       do you think they could happen?
                       what would be the top 3 things, in the future?
                       what's special or important about those things?
                       do you think they could happen?

Q2:   If you could achieve your wishes or hopes, how would that <u>make you feel</u>?
        Prompt: do you often feel like that?
                       who would you talk to about it?
                       what would they say about it?
                       what would you say to yourself about it?
                       would your life change a little or a lot?

Q3:   Is there anything that might <u>stop you</u> achieving your wishes or hopes?
        Prompt: do you think it could happen?
                       is it something that's happened already?
                       how does it make you feel?
                       do you worry about it?
                       is it a big worry or a smaller worry?
                       who can you talk to about it?

Q4:   What could <u>you</u> do more of to help achieve your wishes or hopes?
        Prompt: what would be the top 3 things to do?
                       can you see yourself doing those things?
                       would it be easy/difficult for you?
                       would it be a big change for you?
                       how would you feel?
                       who would encourage you?

Q5:   What could <u>adults or the government</u> do more of to help achieve your wishes or hopes?
        Prompt: what would be the top 3 things for them to do?
                        why are those things important?
                        do you think they could do those things?
                        how would you feel if they did?
                        why haven't they done them already?

Q6:   What do adults <u>need to know</u> about you and other young people to help you live your lives
        to the full?
        Prompt: what are the top 3 things?
                        why are those things important?
                        what do young people want more of?
                        what do young people want less of?
                        what does it mean <u>to you</u>, 'to live your life to the full'?

CLOSE
*"Thank you, everyone. You've been really helpful and have come up with so many good thoughts
and ideas. It's been great listening to you.*

It's really important that young people speak out about what's important to you.

Does anyone have any more comments, or suggestions?"

Give a book-mark to each participant, as a 'thank you'.

Draw attention to the back of the book-mark and the details about the online survey. Ask them to
complete the survey, and also tell their friends about it.

"Thanks again, it's been great meeting you."

Turn recorder OFF

Attachment 5: Literature Review

COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**RESEARCH PROJECT TO ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
ABOUT VIEWS OF THEIR WELLBEING**

COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**RESEARCH PROJECT TO ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
ABOUT VIEWS OF THEIR WELLBEING**

1. Literature Review – Purpose and Scope

1.1 Purpose

This is a review of some of the Australian and international literature on child and youth wellbeing; it forms Stage 1 of the research project. The primary purpose has been to locate and review studies based on direct input from children and young people in order to identify the extent and scope of work previously undertaken and to inform the qualitative and quantitative components of the CCYP research.

The secondary purpose is to identify instances where government agencies have been required to take the views of children and young people into account in the development of legislation, programs and services. Such policies may relate to an extensive array of matters affecting children and young people, such as the environment, urban planning, health, education, justice, housing, child care, personal safety, regional development and so on. Examples of government policies (in Australia and internationally) requiring agencies to conduct research with children and young people would be useful to the Commissioner in deciding how best to make use of the findings from this project and to help establish an evidence base that will promote the optimal development and wellbeing of Australian children and young people.[2] There has been insufficient time to conduct such research fully at this point and it will be re-considered in the first half of 2010.

The literature around children is enormous and much of it is beyond expectations for and the scope of this project. Some passing reference is made, for example, to 'report card' style documents and the considerable information about child health, but the focus in this survey of the literature is primarily methodological in nature, referring particularly to the concept of wellbeing. What can we learn from what has been previously done that will result in obtaining valid and useful information from the children who assist the project team during the course of the project? The survey also looks particularly issues around working with children not from the mainstream culture, particularly Aboriginal children.

It should be noted that the contents of this literature review belong to the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People. It is released to the Reference Group for this project but should not be distributed further.

1.2 'Wellbeing'

The *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* defines wellbeing as "the care, development, education, health and safety of children and young people". There are many other definitions in the literature but this research will not be shaped by them.

In this research project, 'wellbeing' will be described by children and young people. Their perceptions of wellbeing (its presence and absence) could be expected to be multifaceted and include the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

1.3 The Literature

There is a broad range of literature looking at the needs of children and young people. These can be categorised in a number of ways. At its most simple the literature can be categorised into three groups – institutional 'report cards', both national and international, research conducted by non-profit organisations often focusing on specific issues (e.g. domestic violence), and academic research focusing on children and young people across a wide range of topics. It is the focus of this brief review to look particularly at the differing methodologies used in these studies, particularly those that seek input from directly from children. A numbered list of references is attached to this report (Attachment 1).

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[2] 'How policy should be developed for children and young people', HM Treasury, UK, might be a helpful starting point.

2.   National and International Report Cards – Government Institutions

In the first group, the United Nations, for example, under the International Convention of the Rights of the Child has published a number of reports (see 105, 105). Often in response to these internationally agreed goals there have been national report cards. There are national report cards from Australia (4, 5, 26),[3] New Zealand (70), Ireland (84, 85), Wales (102), Canada (48) and the United States (36). London (51) provides an example of research at a local level (below national governments). Similarly, in the Australian context, as well as national reports, there has been considerable research undertaken on in New South Wales (78, 79, 80, 81) on behalf of its government and, increasingly, in the other states.

Within the 'report card' category the methodology varies. Generally all contain considerable statistical data, particularly in the area of child health. Some are totally data driven in this sense. Less frequently is there information on more subjective variables based on self-reporting by children although this appears to be increasing as governments engage in consultation with children and young people.

2.1   United Nations

The United Nations through UNICEF has a comprehensive reporting regime on child health and wellbeing and reports are published regularly – *The State of the World's Children* – generally with a particular focus in any given year.

A 2007 report, *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations*, looked at six dimensions (106) of child wellbeing.
Dimension 1: Material Well Being (child poverty compared to others in their country)
Dimension 2: Health and Safety
Dimension 3: Educational Well-Being
Dimension 4: Relationships (with family and friends)
Dimension 5: Behaviours and Risks (includes issues like smoking, drug use and violence)
Dimension 6: Subjective Well Being (what young people themselves say about how they feel)

The sixth dimension, in particular, attempted to reflect children's own views and voices, to focus more directly on children's perceptions of their own well-being. For example the surveys asked about reported family affluence, experience of bullying, or the frequency of communication with parents. Three components were selected to represent this dimension – the proportion of young people rating their own health no more than 'fair' or 'poor', the proportion who report 'liking school a lot', and a measure of children's overall satisfaction with their own lives.

Specifically,
Health: Students age 11, 13 and 15 were asked the question *'Would you say that your health is excellent, good, fair, or poor?'*.
School: Children aged 11, 13, and 15 were asked to tick one of four possible attitudes to school – *'I like it a lot, I like it a bit, I don't like it very much, or I don't like it at all'*.
Life satisfaction: Children aged 11, 13, and 15 were asked the following question: *'Here is a picture of a ladder. The top of the ladder,10, is the best possible life for you and the bottom, 0, is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment? Tick the box next to the number that best describes where you stand.'*
Out of place: Young people were asked to agree or disagree with three statements about themselves:
❑   *I feel like an outsider or left out of things*
❑   *I feel awkward and out of place*
❑   *I feel lonely*

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[3] At a more specific level the Commonwealth has conducted a National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being that has a Child and Adolescent Component (95). It found that 14 per cent of children and adolescents in Australia have mental health problems. This is very similar to the prevalence identified in previous Australian and overseas surveys. Only one out of every four young people with mental health problems, however, receives professional help.

2.2 Australia

In Australia in 2007 the Commonwealth Government issued a response (27) to the United Nations document, *A World Fit for Children*. It was developed following an extensive consultation process with all governments, non-government organisations and parents. Contributing to this response the NSW Commission for Children and Young People consulted (81) with over 500 children and young people aged 5-17 years across Australia through a series of small focus group consultations and an online survey (intended to supplement the information gathered in the focus groups). Children talked about their ideas for making Australia a better place for children and young people. Through words, pictures, stories, laughter and written comments they provided a snapshot of their lives within their communities.

Over recent years almost all Australian states have created a special bodies to advocate on behalf of children in terms of education, health, care and safety – a role similar to the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People who has commissioned this project. Each body engaged in research to a greater or lesser degree. New South Wales has been most active in this area. Relevant websites for each of these organisations are listed below.

New South Wales – Commissioner for Children and Young People (an independent organisation that reports directly to the NSW Parliament)
http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/

Victoria – The Child Safety Commissioner provides advice to the Minister for Community Services and the Minister for Children on issues affecting children's lives.
http://www.ocsc.vic.gov.au/

Queensland – The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian is an Independent body.
http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/index.html

Western Australia – Commissioner for Children and Young People
http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/index.aspx

South Australia – The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People is an independent body.
http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au/cgi-bin/wf.pl

Tasmania – The Office of the Commissioner for Children is an independent body responsible to the Parliament of Tasmania.
http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/

Australian Capital Territory – Children and Young People Commissioner (works within the ACT Human Rights Commission)
http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/index.cfm?MasterTypeID=5&SectionTypeID=51&MainTypeID=51

Northern Territory –The Children's Commissioner is an independent statutory officer reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

2.2.1 New South Wales

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People and the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney asked 126 children and young people (178 interviews) aged between eight and fifteen from across New South Wales about what wellbeing means to them. The report (78) includes a clear discussion of the methodology, sampling and participant recruitment strategies.

While the research questions and topics provided overall direction, the children were free to explore the research topic in their own way. The research was made up of three stages. The same researcher followed through in each stage with the child or young person. Not all children participated in all three stages. Each stage offered the children and young people a range of activities but it was up to the

participants whether they used these activities or not. These activities were aimed at making the research fun, putting participant's more at ease and, reducing the pressure on them to talk if they did not want to. Supplementary activities included:

❑ talking about photographs they chose from a range of photographs provided to them by the researcher of common environments and objects which may be relevant to well-being;
❑ using drawing to express key topics such as 'wellbeing places';
❑ using a magic wand to discuss how they would change a not well-being time into a well-being time;
❑ using pictures of faces expressing different feelings to describe well-being and feelings associated with well-being;
❑ using story and narrative to describe well-being, for instance describing to an imaginary space creature what well-being means and what it feels like to be well; and
❑ using lists and tables to 'map' what was important to well-being.

In the third stage the children and young people completed a project of their own design that explored a particular well-being theme or themes of interest to them. They had free rein and chose to use photography, collage, drawing and journal keeping in their projects.

Count me in! is a practical resource (79) developed by the Commission to help researchers involve children and young people in their work. It contains useful information and ideas to develop and support children and young people's participation in the research process so that everyone benefits. It looks at how traditional research processes and methods can be designed, approached and used in a child-centred and participatory way. The guide covers the types of skills researchers should build upon to make research collaborative and can be used to get a better understanding of the get a better understanding of the ethical issues relevant to research with children and young people.

The Commission has undertaken a series of other research projects (other than wellbeing) which outline kids' views are about important areas of their lives (80). A number of these may be useful in the conduct of the West Australian research such as "Issues important to kids", "Young people talk alcohol" and "Kids talk about getting help".

2.2.2   Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

In 2003 the Children's Services Branch, ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services reported on *Hearing young children's voices: Consulting with Children Birth to Eight Years of Age* (24) as part of developing a children's strategy. Sixteen children's services and a total of 137 children participated in the project. The majority (75 of 137) of children were between 3 and 5 years old; a small minority (8 of 137) were two years old or less. The children who participated in the Project attended a diversity of services (eg family day care, play group, long day care, primary school, preschool, a special education unit (school for children with additional needs) and a women's refuge); and several of the children attended more than one type of service. The children were asked three questions derived from the broader consultations about the ACT Children's Strategy. These questions were:

1.   What do the children think that they need for their wellbeing?
2.   What do the children value and wish for in their lives?
3.   What makes the children feel valued?

Children were invited to express their ideas and feelings in response to these questions using multi-media. Data generated by the children in response to these questions included paintings, drawings, a CDROM, poems, audio-tapes and text. Adults also gathered data from children in response to these questions through field notes of discussions with and observations of children, photographs and audio-recordings.

In 2005 the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services engaged in a consultation with children to determine the need for a Commissioner for Children and Young People ((2). A total of 362 children participated in the consultation. Most (52% of participants) were between eight to 12 years of age and a minority (7.5%) were five years of age or younger. The children that participated in the consultation were accessed through a diversity of networks that work directly with children. These included primary schools, early childhood education and care settings, women's refuges, hospitals,

children residing in foster care and children with disabilities.

Children were invited to express their ideas and feelings in response to questions about the role and function of the Commissioner. A special survey sheet was developed to record children's responses. An additional page for children's artwork was attached to the survey, acknowledging that children, particularly young children could respond to the questions through creative art work.

More recently (2008) a Community Network Forum comprised of people from many organisations within the ACT community, gathered to discuss a children's plan. A report, *Raising Children's Voices: Listen, Acknowledge, Understand, Act* (28), was the result. Children from primary schools around Canberra were invited to comment on the following two open ended questions:

❑ What are some ways that adults could listen to children?
❑ Why do you think it's important for people who make rules and laws to listen to what children say?

The Children and Young People Commissioner, (ACT) in March 2009 circulated to its network of contacts a brief survey (22) to determine the views of children and young people on smoking.

In 2004, the ACT Government outlined a 2‑3 year reform program for the care and protection of children and young people, their families and carers in the ACT. A key goal of the implementation strategy was to 'Improve service responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families' and to 'Strengthen participation of children and young people in decision‑making that affects their lives'. The strategy was reviewed in 2007 in a project developed as a participatory action learning process which incorporated multiple cycles of planning, observation, action and critical reflection to explore and discuss the complex social situations young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. In two youth forums 52 children and young people participated in a relaxed environment using culturally congruent and youth-friendly methods. A report *"They've gotta listen" – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Young People in Out of Home Care* was published in October 2007 (73).

2.2.3   Queensland

In 2006 the Department of Child Safety in Queensland commissioned a review of relevant work of other Australian jurisdictions, literature and research to identify models of engagement and participation that have been demonstrated to be successful in relation to:

❑ case planning and ongoing intervention
❑ provision of feedback on service delivery
❑ engagement in service planning processes
❑ engagement in the development of policy and procedures
❑ collecting data about participation for evaluation and service review processes
❑ models of peer to peer research and facilitation

The result was *Listening, hearing and acting: Approaches to the participation of children and young people in decision making – a review of the literature* (90).

In 2008 the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian in Queensland published *Views of Children and Young People in Foster Care*. This report (26) represents the findings of a survey about the views of children and young people in foster and kinship care. It was undertaken to better understand the views, concerns and wishes of children and young people who are living in alternative care and the effectiveness of recent reforms to the child protection system. The result is a very rich dataset that has the power to provide information and show trends over time on a broad range of topics within alternative settings. The responses of the young people and children living in foster or kinship care reflect their views about their experiences in foster or kinship care, particularly their day-to-day interactions with carers, Child Safety Officers and Community Visitors, and other more general aspects of the child protection system.

2.2.4   Victoria

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) in 2008 released *Dardee*

Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People (35). The Charter was developed in recognition that, despite the strength of Aboriginal families and culture, many Aboriginal children and young people continue to experience significantly worse outcomes in life than non-Aboriginal children. The Charter identifies five domains of safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing and is grounded in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. The Charter recognises the impact of past removal policies, particularly the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

2.3   United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom in 2003 the government issued a Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, a set of Government proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families. The proposals were developed in the context of failures in child protection. As part of the consultation process a booklet for children and young people was developed and they were asked to respond. There were 3000 responses.   Another 750 (age 4 to 18) went to meetings around the country. Children were asked a number of questions (see Appendix 1) around issues of wellbeing and a report written for them documents their responses (49).

The Children's Rights Director for England (CRD) has a website with information particularly for children and young people who live away from home and providing them with an opportunity to have to say about how they are looked after. Such children may live in a children's home, family centre, boarding school, residential special school, further education college, with foster carers, are adopted, or getting any sort of help from social services or a care leaver.   The Director regularly publishes a range of reports and other information for young people such as children's views on complaints (23).   The website contains well over 40 such reports.

For example in a review of children's care they talked to 86 children and young people, some individually and others in 12 different discussion groups, without adults present.   Others sent their views on question cards.   A report entitled "Future Rules" was based on a one day consultation of 136 children and young people. Children and young people filled out question cards, received gift vouchers in return and had a day out.

2.3.1   London

The State of London's Children Report (51), commissioned by the Greater London Authority, and published in 2007, relies largely on existing information from a variety of sources. As a consequence, as the report notes, the "Report is inevitably a reflection of what can be counted rather than everything that counts." The authors highlight the limitations of the available data, particularly in identifying the measures that are a true reflection of the breadth of children's lives, pointing out that some of the most important elements of a good childhood, such as being loved and valued, are less susceptible to measurement. There is some limited use of self-reported information although it is not clear how this was attained. It appears to come from specific studies conducted by others.

2.3.2   Scotland

The South Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire & Arran Health Board in Scotland contracted CRFC to provide a research briefing getting views children, parents and service providers on children's services (97). The briefing reports how to conduct such consultations and which methods to use. The consultation included those children and young people as well as their parents, and staff providing a range of services in health, social work, education and voluntary organisations.

2.4   Ireland

Ireland has committed to biennial reporting on the wellbeing of children and young people (*The State of the Nation's Children*), with the most recent published in 2008 (84, 85). The report draws on a wide variety of statistical information; a number of the measures required a form of self-reporting. It is not clear whether this self-reported data was drawn from pre-existing information sources or from research conducted specifically for the report. The type of self-reported information included is at Appendix 2.

In *Children's Understandings of Well-Being* (47), the National Children's Office in Ireland (2005) has produced an excellent description on how children can discuss their well-being through the use of photographs. The research is based on investigations in the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI

Galway. There were three main components to the study. The first involves the use of disposable cameras by children. Class groups of children were shown how to use a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of things, people or places that *"make them well"* or *"keep them well".* The cameras provided took up to 27 colour photographs. Once developed, the photographs were returned to the children who had taken them and they were asked to annotate them. A full set of their own photographs and the single set of negatives were returned to each child. The second component involved groups of children looking at the developed photographs and dividing them into groups of mutually exclusive categories. The third component involved further groups of children in developing schematic representations, or schemata, of well-being, using photographic examples of the categories. These schemata were first developed by single gender groups, then by mixed gender groups. A final integration by a group of older young people was designed to provide a comprehensive representation of wellbeing relevant to Irish children. The report notes changes made to the methodology after the pilot study.

A study on service users' perceptions of child protection (83) was commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Children in Ireland with the overall aim of examining the views of service users on the child protection services, including their perception of being included in decision-making and having their views taken seriously. The research was qualitative in nature and involved sampling the views and experiences of 67 service users, 39% of whom had initiated contact with the HSE child protection service and 61% of whom were referred to the service by others. Links were made with participants via a range of organisations, including family support services, refuge and treatment services, community and youth projects, and redress bodies. Thirteen of the service users interviewed were young people who had been the subject of child protection concerns. In-depth interviews were conducted in 16 counties throughout Ireland and the data processed using the NVivo software package.

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland has produced a range of other reports including:
❑   the development of the Children's Code of Advertising (2004);
❑   the development of the National Recreation Policy for Young People (2005);
❑   the development of a national set of child well-being indicators (2005);
❑   the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2006);
❑   the age of consent for sexual activity (2006);
❑   the development of the Irish Youth Justice Strategy (2007);
❑   the misuse of alcohol among young people (2007).

The report on the misuse of alcohol among young people is of particular relevance to the CCYP project as 'Open Space' was used as the principal methodology for the consultation process. Following a brief introduction to the topic and methodology, each participant was asked to identify what they considered the two most important solutions to alcohol misuse. Having been given two 'post-its' each, the participants were then invited to 'post' their contribution on an open wall. With the help of young people from the CYPF, these issues were then clustered together to form the themes for the workshops for the day. At some consultations, as many as eight different themes were identified for workshops, but as few as four separate themes were identified in one location. Whatever the number, it was the issues and themes identified by the participants themselves that formed the agenda and workshops for each consultation. Young people could choose to go to any of the four workshops in the morning and any of the four workshops in the afternoon. They could also choose to use the 'law of two feet' and move from one workshop to another at any point.

The workshops were facilitated by adult facilitators, familiar with the 'Open Space' methodology and trained to ensure the voice of the young person is at the fore. Having evaluated the first two consultations, it was decided to introduce a 'moving debate' into the consultation programme. Based on the themes emerging on the day, questions were posed to participants, asking them to stand in a position that represented 'agree', 'disagree' or 'undecided'. Participants were asked why they had chosen such a position and also given an opportunity to move, having listened to other perspectives or opinions. The 'moving debate' was designed to allow participants more time to interact and engage with each other, debate differing opinions and provide a space for them to work out how they felt about various issues before casting their 'sticky dot' vote.

2.5 Canada

On behalf of the Government of British Columbia the University of British Columbia summarized research and related literature pertinent to the mental health needs of Aboriginal children and youth. A primary goal of the review was to provide the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Aboriginal communities with information and guidance for new approaches and services to support the development and implementation of a broad strategy to improve the mental health and well-being of Aboriginal children and youth. The authors reviewed, analyzed and summarized published and unpublished literature from the previous decade. The also conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants from First Nations tribes with extensive experience as community workers and leaders, and because of their commitment to improving quality of life for families. The result is an annotated bibliography (75) and a comprehensive research report (76).

3. Non-Government Organisations

The second major category of reports comes from non-government organisations of which there are a great variety in Australia and internationally. A small selection of reports is noted here.

3.1 Australia
3.1.1 Australian Institute of Family Studies

In Australia, commencing in 2004, the Australian Institute of Family Studies is conducting a longitudinal study with 10,000 children and their families called *Growing Up in Australia* (3). The study, which is following the development of these children until 2010 and possibly beyond, addresses a range of key questions about children's development and wellbeing. Information is collected on the children's physical health and social, cognitive and emotional development, as well as their experiences in key environments such as the family, community, child care, pre- and primary school settings. Information is collected via interviews with parents (and children from age 6–7 years); direct assessments of the children; self-complete questionnaires filled out by mothers and fathers (including those living apart from the child), carers and teachers; and time use diaries completed by parents about their child's activities over two 24-hour periods (during the week and on a weekend).

Through its monthly journal, *Family Matters*, the Australian Institute of Family Studies has published a range of articles that are relevant to the project. Some are noted below.

Andrew J Cherlin (21) suggests that the greater the number of transitions to which children must adjust, the worse off they appear to be with regard to outcomes such as behaviour problems and teenage childbearing suggesting that policy makers take notice of the emerging phenomenon of multiple partnerships. The speed with which some adults proceed from partnership to dissolution to re-partnering may not be optimal for any children involved.

Richard Eckersley (40) asks whether young people are having the time of their lives, or struggling with life in their times? Eckersley argues that it is not an "either/or" situation and calls for a greater appreciation of the causal layers and complexities behind the patterns and trends in young people's wellbeing.

Sheryl A Hempill (53) et al. reports on the levels of positive school engagement and family characteristics associated with engagement for adolescents in prevention and intervention programs for behavioural and emotional problems in Australia and the United States.

Darryl J Higgins et al. (54) report the views of Indigenous young people in care, as well as the views of carers of Indigenous young people, about their experiences and needs, the challenges they have faced, and their views on promising practices for children in 'out of home' care. The views were gathered during focus groups conducted with Indigenous young people in care, and with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous carers of Indigenous young people in two Australian jurisdictions.

Tess Ridge (92) reports research findings from the *Child-centred Approach to Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion* Study, a study of low-income children in the UK that attempted to address a range of policy issues in education, health and employment by engaging directly with children. Using qualitative in-depth interviews to explore the issues and concerns that low income children themselves identified

as meaningful, the study provides valuable insights into the everyday challenges faced by children who are poor and disadvantaged.

Sven R. Silburn et al (91) has attempted to attempt to address the lack of empirical data that would scientifically document the nature and extent of intergenerational effects from forced separation and forced relocation and their devastating consequences in terms of social and cultural dislocation and health and wellbeing in subsequent generations of Aboriginal people.

3.1.2   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in its latest (2009) report, *A Picture of Australia's Children* (4, 5), takes a statistical snapshot which presents the latest available data on key national indicators of health, development and wellbeing of Australian children aged 0–14 years. More recently it is looking at a wider set of influences on children's health, development and wellbeing, including learning and education and the role of family and community.

3.1.3   Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth
The Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth is non-profit organization that engages in a diverse range of research. Of particular relevance to the project is a compendium of research findings (7). It concludes that involving children in participatory research raises a number of ethical and access challenges, which highlight the need to better understand the nature and impacts of participatory research in relation to children. The compendium is supported by a literature review which examines the ethical and methodological contexts in which research conversations have begun around the world in relation to children's capacities to act as protagonists in their own lives. The major themes and considerations that emerge are summarised under three headings: research approaches and methodologies, ethics and consent issues, and implications for practice. It concludes that successful participatory research is respectful, builds trust, is flexible and adaptable, transparent and accountable, and brings benefit to children and young people.

A further review (9) in 2008 explores the literature, policy and practice contexts which explain and shape the Australian approach to supporting children living in disadvantaged communities. It finds that these theoretical, policy and practice frameworks that seek to support and protect children in communities do not acknowledge or work with children's capacity to act in and shape their environments. It considers the literature which explores children's agency and draws together key principles and suggested methods from the literature which can assist adults who wish to explore and engage with children's agency in communities. The hope is that these approaches can contribute to theory, policy and practice which take account of children's agency thereby enriching our understanding of the strengths and potential of children in communities.

Another 2008 report (6) looks at research undertaken with the aim of demonstrating strategies for successful inclusion into Australian society of children and families from culturally and linguistically different (CaLD) backgrounds. CaLD children and families are commonly disadvantaged through being part of a minority group in Australia, their experiences prior to migration (for example refugee trauma), the different values and practices they may encounter here, the difficulty of learning a new language, the problems they face having qualifications and experience ratified, and the varying forms of racism the may experience. The report identifies a number of innovative and highly successful programmes that operate in different areas of Australia that are very successful in supporting CaLD families. It notes that programmes tend to be most successful when their staff are of the same cultural background as the clients of the programme, and are able to develop extensive networks with the community targeted by the programme.

ARACY in 2008 also produced a *Report Card: The Wellbeing of Young Australians* (8). The Report Card presents a comprehensive summary of the wellbeing of Australia's young people, including the most recent international comparisons available. It provides an international perspective and sets a baseline for future monitoring of the wellbeing of young people. It uses eight domains that affect the health and wellbeing of young people:
- material wellbeing
- health and safety
- education, training and employment

- ❑ peer and family relationships
- ❑ behaviours and risks
- ❑ subjective wellbeing
- ❑ participation
- ❑ environment

3.1.4   Institute of Child Health Research

Over the period 2004 to 2004 the Institute of Child Health Research at the University of Western Australia published a four-volume report entitled the *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey* (61). The WAACHS is the largest and most comprehensive study of Aboriginal child health and development ever undertaken in Australia and outlines what is required to improve community and scientific understanding of what Aboriginal children and young people need in order to develop in healthy ways. The WAACHS was a large-scale investigation into the physical health, social and emotional wellbeing of 5,289 Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years.

- ❑ Volume 1 describes the physical health of Aboriginal children and young
- ❑ Volume 2 focuses on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people
- ❑ Volume 3 examines the educational experiences of Aboriginal children and young people
- ❑ Volume 4 examines the role of families and communities in supporting the healthy development of Aboriginal children and young people

In particular in the second volume information was collected about difficulties with emotions and feelings, self-harm or attempted suicide, cultural engagement, experience of loss or trauma, substance or alcohol use, family violence and child abuse.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a widely used measure of emotional and behavioural difficulties, such as conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and anti-social behaviour, was used in the WAACHS to measure the prevalence of these problems within the young Indigenous population of Australia. Before the questionnaire was administered, however, a series of modifications were made to ensure that the measure was culturally appropriate. In particular, changes to the wording of items and to the response scale were made using language that was familiar to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In order to provide a benchmark for comparing the SDQ results from the WAACHS, SDQ data were also collected from a sample of 1,200 non-Indigenous children aged 4–17 years.

3.1.5   Australia 21

A report by Richard Eckersley, Ani Wierenga and Johanna Wyn (39) draws together the findings of a cross-disciplinary project carried out by Australia 21, a non-profit research company, and the Australian Youth Research Centre to seek a better understanding of the points of convergence and divergence in the commentaries and evidence relating to young people's wellbeing. The project suggests a need for a greater focus in both research and policy on the following issues: the 'big picture' of the broad social changes reshaping life today; holistic approaches to health and wellbeing (rather than just a focus on ill health); a whole of population approach, (rather than just a concern with the marginalised and at-risk); and consideration of the social and cultural resources, as well as the material and economic resources, that impact on wellbeing. Perceptions of young people's health and wellbeing vary greatly, reflecting differences between disciplines, ideologies and generations. Young people are seen to be resilient, adaptable and doing well and, at the same time, experiencing increased rates of some important mental and physical health problems. Over 80 per cent of young people say in surveys that they are healthy, happy and satisfied with their lives. On the other hand, many young people are not faring well. More young people are overweight or obese and inactive, placing them at risk of a wide range of health problems later in life, including diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. A fifth to a third of young people are experiencing significant psychological stress and distress at any one time, with some estimates of the prevalence of a more general malaise reaching 50 per cent.

3.1.6   Mission Australia

Mission Australia conducts a regular survey (71) of young Australians. It is deliberately kept brief (15 questions) in order to encourage a large response from a diversity of young people. In the 2008 survey seven questions sought respondents' views on a variety of issues such as what they value, their issues

of concern, who they turn to for advice and support, what activities they are involved in, and who they admire. The remaining questions collected demographic data including age, gender, state/territory location, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification and disability status. The survey is distributed to a wide range of organisations, including all secondary schools and public and tertiary libraries in Australia. It was also distributed to all Mission Australia services as well as a large network of other service providers, Commonwealth, state/territory and local government departments, youth organisations, peak bodies and corporate partners. An online version of the survey was also available, which contained an additional free text question inviting respondents to elaborate on their issues of concern.

3.1.7   Ngala

In 2008 Ngala, a West Australian organisation supporting families with babies and young children with their parenting commissioned research (59) to explore the views of childcare workers and early childhood teachers (practitioners) on young children's involvement in decision making. While children did not speak directly for themselves the research was focused on their decision-making capacities. How did their carers understand notions of decision making in children and what did this mean for them in their practice of working on an everyday level with young children? Practitioners placed a strong emphasis on decision making as a developmental skill important to guiding a child towards independence and becoming a functional and capable individual.

3.1.8   Kids Help Line

The Kids Help Line is a service to children and young people that also undertakes occasional research. In 1999 the Kids Helpline in Australia contracted the Dangar research group to look at *Growing up in Australia*. Their study (32) was quantitative in nature and involved interviewing children aged 8-15 years via a door to door methodology.

A report entitled *Regional and Rural Young People* (63) found that Australian young people living outside of capital cities and other major urban population centres encounter a number of challenges that are not normally part of the everyday experience of young people living in metropolitan areas. The challenges include obtaining access to suitable and appropriate health and welfare services, education and training, paid employment, economic stability and recreational opportunities.

Social Exclusion and Australian Youth: An Analysis of KHL Data from 2005-2007 (64) concludes that social exclusion is a very real challenge confronting many of the young people who contact Kids Helpline for assistance. It undertakes an analysis of the most prevalent problems that children and young people present to Kids Helpline concerning social exclusion.

In 2002 Kids Helpline, in a report entitled *How Children Tell Their Troubles* (65), describe the ways in which callers disclose and describe their troubles and how counsellors respond. Using a technique known as Conversational Analysis taped conversations between callers and counselors were examined. The article describes some observations on the opening sequences in calls.

3.1.9   Saulwick Muller Social Research

A study (93) commissioned by Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) and conducted by Saulwick Muller Social Research was based on eight focus group discussions conducted among young people in July 2006. Young people were defined in two cohorts, namely those aged 16 to 19 years of age and those aged 20 to 24. The research looked at the morale of young Australians and their expectations concerning the future. While the main focus is on education and work the discussions with young people were placed in a wider context:

❑   What did they think about Australian society?
❑   What did they want out of life?
❑   How confident were they of realising those dreams?
❑   What, if anything, did they think might get in their way?

3.2   United Kingdom
3.2.1   Kidspeak

In the United Kingdom in 2007 the *Kidspeak* on-line consultation with children and young people was set up by Women's Aid, in partnership with Margaret Moran MP, and funding from The Body Shop, to

talk about domestic violence (11). Two separate secure message boards were created, linked to The Hideout, Women's Aid's website for children and young people affected by domestic violence (www.thehideout.org.uk). One message board was available for anyone to access; the other was for children and young people supported within domestic violence services, children's charities, and similar organisations, and gave them the opportunity to ask questions and get responses from key decision makers (such as MPs, magistrates, judges and other professionals) who were invited to take part. To ensure the safety of participants, all messages received were checked by trained moderators before being available to read on the site.

3.2.2   New Philanthropy Capital

British authors Lucy Heady and Ana Oliveira (52) discuss the development of a questionnaire to measure children's well-being in *On the bright side: Developing a questionnaire for charities to measure children's well-being* (January 2008). The tool is meant for children aged 11 to 16 with the age range chosen to avoid literacy problems. This tool is designed to be off-the-shelf for charities that do not have the resources to create a wellbeing measure themselves. The questionnaire has been piloted twice. 'Well-being' is seen as an umbrella term that covers everything a child needs to lead a good life: from friends and family to school and physical fitness. In the development of the questionnaire the researchers have given particular attention to what children themselves consider to be important for their own well-being.

The tool has been designed to meet the following criteria:
❑   easy to use (i.e. quick to administer and answerable by the children themselves);
❑   relevant to all aspects of a child's well-being;
❑   comparable across time and people; and,
❑   sensitive enough to capture the impact of charities' work.

The ten domains of 'wellbeing' and the questionnaire are found at Appendix 3.

3.2.3   The Children's Society

Earlier this year the Children's Society in Britain published *A Good Childhood* (68). Their report was based on three years of research. In addition to drawing on the wide variety of existing statistical data the Good Childhood Inquiry received contributions from over 30,000 children and young people, adults and professionals. Children's evidence came in a variety of different forms. Thousands of children filled in 'my life' postcards responding in words and pictures to open, exploratory questions about what constitutes a good life. Thousands more took part online responding to specific questions about the six themes of the inquiry. In addition, more than 50 focus groups were also carried out to explore particular themes with children and young people who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to take part. They were asked what they think makes for a good childhood in the UK today.

The research also included a national survey of a representative sample of over 11,000 young people aged 14 to 16 years. The two primary purposes of the survey were to explore some key issues affecting young people (including running away, anti-social behaviour, and discrimination) and to explore young people's views on the quality of their lives. The respondents were asked about the concept of a 'good childhood' in the form of two questions:
❑   What do you think are the most important things that make for a good life for young people?
❑   What things do you think stop young people from having a good life?

4.   Academic Research – Books and Journals

A number of academic papers have been considered. Only those of particular interest from a methodological perspective have been included in this brief summary although others are listed in the references at Attachment 1.

In 2005 **Darbyshire** *et al.* (33) edited a special issue of *Early Child Development and Care* looking at issues involved in researching the views and experiences of young children, seen as one of the most important, exciting and challenging areas of contemporary childhood research and service provision for children. The special issues recognizes the growing interest in understanding children's views and experiences from the child's perspective and placing it at the nexus of a range of distinct but inter-

related social, political, pragmatic and theoretical forces. The research impetus in this area has arisen partly from the 'new sociology of childhood' program of research in the UK. Also the Children's Rights movement, inspired by the UN Charter (United Nations, 1989), has highlighted that children do have valid and valuable views and opinions that deserve to be elicited and taken seriously. Across a range of children's services there is an expectation of greater and more meaningful 'consumer participation and involvement'. This means that children's views must be taken into account. This does not dismiss the importance of adults but recognises that the adult view cannot be the only valid research perspective. Previous approaches to researching children's experiences have been essentially 'research on' rather than 'research with' or 'research for' children. This approach ignored the possibility that children could contribute valuable knowledge and insights as active agents and key informants in relation to their own lives and deemed them to be poor research respondents. There has been a growing awareness that while quantitative, survey and experimental studies are necessary, they cannot by themselves provide sufficient information or the insight required to fully capture the nuanced complexity of children's experiences. The contributors to this special issue add to a growing body of work that highlights the importance of using a multi-method approach to child-hood research that is culturally, developmentally and contextually sensitive. A number of articles from the journal issue are included in the references.

In Australia **Pocock and Clarke** (86) looked at the perceptions of young people (Year 6 and Year 11) about working parents. Their methodology was based on the conduct of 21 small focus groups. The authors comment on the use of such groups.

> [F]ocus groups allow 'deep' analysis through the pursuit of complex issues within complex contexts, and they expose ambivalence and unanticipated factors more so than closed questionnaires. It also means the ability to include a larger number of participants. They also allow an exchange of ideas amongst participants which can reveal unexpected lines of thought and views. Interviews do not always permit this kind of exchange and comparison of views, and they tend to rely more upon pre-prepared questions that are asked intensively, one on one. Focus groups allow an exchange that can trigger unexpected directions and test different observations and their rationales.

Mr Polatnick (87) explores children's views on whether they get sufficient time with dual-earner or single parents who are employed full-time. It draws on semi-structured interviews with twenty-two children, ages ten to twelve and from diverse backgrounds, and on supplementary interviews with twenty-six of their parents. The children's responses about parental availability were complex and contradictory. Most children seemed to feel more dissatisfaction than they stated on the surface. The author argues that family, social, and economic pressures influenced them to damp down or suppress desires for parental time and raises concerns about the potential for underestimating children's discontent.

In their paper **Fattore** and colleagues (44) describe the process and some findings of a collaborative project between the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People and researchers at the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, at the University of Western Sydney *(Ask the Children)*. In the strategies they devised to facilitate children entering into dialogue with the researchers, the researchers attempted to minimise linguistic and conceptual barriers to communication. Strategies included providing choices of forms of participation, for instance
- individual interviews,
- peer-based, or group discussions;
- the use of graphics as part of and separately from verbal interactions and
- opportunities to follow up on a theme through project type work, such as photography and collages, as a basis for discussion with researchers.

Additionally, in response to the input of children, the authors modified the research process after the first stage, from what was initially envisaged, to enable dialogue to continue around themes important to the participants.

Hume and Ball (60) investigated children's perceptions of their environments and examined associations between these perceptions and objectively measured physical activity. The sample consisted of 147, 10-year-old Australian children, who drew maps of their home and neighborhood

environments. A subsample of children photographed places and things in these environments that were important to them. The maps were analysed for themes, and for the frequency with which particular objects and locations appeared.

Wendy Holmes et al. (57) describe the first stage of a study of the health and well-being of Aboriginal urban young people initiated and carried out by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), a community controlled organisation. This longitudinal study aims to describe the prevalence and incidence of a range of health problems and to explore their interrelated determinants. The process of planning and carrying out this study raised a number of interesting ethical, cultural and methodological issues. These include the establishment of an appropriate and properly constituted local ethics committee, the difficulty of obtaining a representative sample, the need for ongoing negotiation, attention to language, the use of a subject-generated identity code, and the need to recruit a wide range of peer interviewers. Achievements include a series of community reports of the findings, the establishment of a cohort of young people for a longitudinal study; a shift in attitudes toward research; a strengthened network of young Kooris; increased use of the health service by young people and the establishment of an after-hours clinic service and meeting place for young people. The authors hope that their analysis of achievements and constraints will assist others planning similar research, and to demonstrate the value for process and outcomes of research conducted under Aboriginal community control.

Bourke and Geldens (14) look at subjective wellbeing and its meaning for young people in a rural Australian centre. Using quantitative measures of subjective wellbeing as well as qualitative interviews to allow young people to discuss the concept of wellbeing, this study explores the levels and meanings of wellbeing among 91 young people (aged 16–24) from a rural center in south-east Australia. Key components of wellbeing for young people were found to include relationships, psychological dimensions and personal issues while family and 'pressure' impacted wellbeing. For most young people, wellbeing was multidimensional, holistic and centred around their own lives. Findings suggest that the Deiner et al. 'satisfaction with life scale' was an appropriate measure of young people's wellbeing but that health, sociology of youth and psychological approaches all contribute to young people's perspectives of wellbeing and need to be incorporated into a more holistic measure of subjective wellbeing for young people.

Based on their experience in developing and evaluating community-based health promotion programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities ***Donovan and Spark*** (38) offer guidelines to assist non-indigenous health and public policy professionals. Their information gathering in these communities includes the use of unstructured interviewing or survey questionnaires. The major aims of these guidelines are to facilitate communication between interviewers and indigenous interviewees and to ensure that interviewing is done with maximum sensitivity to cultural differences and with minimum discomfort to the respondents.

In their study ***Mohajer, Bessarab and Earnest*** (72) sought to identify the views of rural Aboriginal adolescents regarding health promotion topics, the most important health problems they faced, their support networks and their beliefs about who should help them meet their health needs. Ninety-nine adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years were involved in in-depth interviews or focus group discussions using a tested and trialled questionnaire. Data collection took place at three sites in rural Australia from 2006 to 2008: two Aboriginal controlled communities and one rural town. After preliminary interviews with parents, teachers, youth and health workers, snowball sampling was used to identify 'vulnerable' adolescents with low school attendance. The mean age of respondents was 13 years. There were 40 male participants and 59 female participants, representing 6 language groups. Data were analysed using thematic matrices and cross-checked in subsequent interactions with participants.

Sawyer, Carbone, Searle and Robinson (94) sought to identify the prevalence of mental health problems, rates of suicidal ideation and behaviour, and use of professional mental health services among children and adolescents residing in home-based foster care, and to compare these rates with those reported for children and adolescents in the general Australian community. The authors used a cross-sectional survey of 326 children and adolescents (aged 6–17 years) residing in home-based foster care in the Adelaide metropolitan region between August 2004 and January 2006. They concluded that

children in home-based foster care experience high rates of mental health problems but only a minority receive professional help for their problems.

Tucci, Mitchell and Goddard (101) asked what it is like growing up as a child in Australia today. What worries do children have? Are children happy? What support do children say they need from other people in their lives? What are their thoughts about the future? The study was based on a survey conducted by Quantum Market Research with a nationally representative sample of 986 children and young people aged between 10–17 years. There was an equal division of 10–13-year-olds and 14–17-year-olds. The key objectives of this analysis were to:

❑ identify the prevailing attitudes and issues of most concern to children and young people in relation to their experiences of growing up in contemporary Australia

❑ explore the views of children and young people in relation to what they need from families and the community to assist them in their growth and development

❑ explore the primary sources of support relied on by children and young people today

❑ develop a basis for informing the evolution of public policy which seeks to further include the voices of children and young people.

Casas et al. (18) looked at the relationship between the psychological wellbeing of Spanish adolescents (12 to 16) and the values they aspire to for the future. The study used the Personal Well Being Index developed by the Australian Quality of Life Centre at Deakin University. The Index has seven core variables: Standard of living, Health, Achieved in life, Relationships, Safety, Community connection, Future security. The study also looked at 23 personal qualities or values.

In her paper Suzanne ***Hood*** (58) uses two reports on child well-being – the *State of London's Children Reports* – as exemplars to show how regular reporting on children can be linked to planning and policy-making in an urban environment. The paper looks at some broader issues relating to child well-being measurement, focusing particularly on the integration of children's own conceptions of their well-being within the processes of indicator development and reporting. The author proposes that children's perspectives on what constitutes their well-being should be integrated alongside and together with more adult-oriented measures; and that work to involve children in child well-being development should make a clear contribution to policies which are aimed at improving the lives of children.

In considering the nature of participatory citizenship for young people in the context of school rules Rebecca ***Raby*** (91) conducted nine focus groups with public secondary school students, generally between ages 14 and 18 in Canada. Participants were provided with refreshments and a $10 honorarium. They were also given the option of choosing their own pseudonyms. Focus groups were tape-recorded and roughly transcribed on-site, then more thoroughly transcribed from tape later. The research findings were that, although students often negotiated rules with their teachers, for the most part they had little sense of themselves as able to influence the rules beyond either obedience or rule-breaking.

Crivello, Camfield and Woodhead (30) have analysed the methods used by the Young Lives project to look at the different methods used to capture aspects of child wellbeing in the context of a range of children's life experiences related to poverty, specific risks and protective processes. They have developed a toolkit of methods that can be applied in diverse cultural contexts, marked by variations in children's daily lives, their relationships with adults (including adult researchers), and preferred ways of communicating their ideas and feelings. The toolkit includes methods based on drawing (e.g. 'Lifecourse draw-and-tell' and 'Happy day/Sad day'), writing (e.g. 'Daily activity diary'), talking (e.g. semi-structured interviews) and on other activity-based techniques (e.g. photo-elicitation and child-led tours of the neighbourhood). Methods also include those influenced by Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques that have been used with adults in developing country contexts. These are generally task- or activity-based and can be highly visual, involving, for example, mapping, ranking, and photography.

The authors note that one of the advantages of using visual data, such as photographs and drawings, or 'active' methods, such as child-led neighbourhood tours, is that children with limited literacy may participate in the research. Visual data enable the researcher to ground discussion in children's experiences and social environments thus making the interpretative process more collaborative.

Children are also able to capture spaces and aspects of their social worlds to which adult researchers may not have access, such as intimate home environments. Other methods are more heavily reliant on literacy, such as the use of diaries which some children may consider 'too much like schoolwork' and therefore not enjoyable. However, diary writing can also be a preferred medium for young people who like that it is 'like schoolwork', as Tekola has documented in her research with children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In a table (see Appendix 4) the authors summarise a variety of child-focused methods that have been documented in the literature.

In their paper **Tekola, Griffin and Camfield** (99) discuss the advantages and challenges of using qualitative methods to elicit poor children's perspectives about threats and positive influences on their wellbeing. It draws on research carried out by the author on the subjective experiences of poor children in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia in terms of their understandings of wellbeing, threats to their wellbeing, coping strategies, and positive or resilient outcomes. The paper describes the use of qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, draw-and-tell, and diaries, the kinds of data they produced and the methodological and ethical dilemmas and tensions encountered in using them. It concludes that, despite the challenges, qualitative methods are invaluable in order to understand what poor children see as threats and positive influences on their wellbeing. The authors used individual interviews, and subsequently diaries, as the major sources of data; the other task-based methods (such as draw-and-tell and timeline) were used after they had already established a close relationship with the children.

Individual interviews with the children were conducted separately from and prior to the "task-based activities". Children's interviews were semi-structured and moved from general to topic-specific questions about their daily experiences and perceptions. During the first two weeks of contact there were informal conversations with them and their parents/caregivers. The focus was on establishing rapport with them and their parents/caregivers. The presence or absence of parents/caregivers made a difference in the way the children talked or answered questions.

Draw-and-write or draw-and-tell is a technique where children draw pictures and write or talk about the meaning of their pictures. It has become an increasing commonly used method which can be applied in a number of ways – to stimulate discussion about a sensitive issue; as an ice-breaker to start a semi-structured qualitative interview; and as an exploratory tool to discover what children consider as important in their lives. Some researchers, however, have concerns about its use. Some see that drawings are open to misinterpretation; that the children's drawing is significantly influenced by "the pictures they see in their environment" and that the research context and process may influence what children produce as 'data'. Additionally drawing depends on "children's actual and perceived ability to draw"; that limited access to visual imagery reduces the range of visual images that children produce; and that in a school context there is a possibility of children copying from friends or from text books. The authors concluded the following (in the Ethiopian context):
- The children needed a long period of time (longer than the time needed for individual interviews) to make their drawings.
- Things/people/places which are difficult to draw were skipped by the children and on the other hand those which are easy to portray were drawn by some of them despite the fact that they are less important to their lives
- Some children focused on the quality of their drawings (to impress the researcher) and drew little about their real experiences.
- It was not an appropriate method for all the children.
- The fact that most of the girls did not have drawing skills made the whole drawing exercise quite taxing for them rather than being a source of fun. The girls tended to draw pictures which they saw from text.

The children were also asked to write a daily diary on how they spend their time during the day including their activities/events, interactions and feelings; this was to be done daily before they went to bed and extended over three and a half months. Weekly, the author collected their diaries after having discussed what they had recorded over the course of the week.

Johanna **Einarsdottir** (41) has written a paper focused on children's photographs as a method to use in research with children very young children. The research took place with children up to six years old in 'playschool' in Iceland. She describes and compares two approaches where cameras were used. One group used digital cameras to take pictures in their playschool while they showed the researcher important places and things in the playschool. The other group was given disposable cameras that they could use unsupervised for a period of time.

The paper concludes that photography is an expanding method in research with children and is regarded as having many advantages including the following:

❑ Because the children can take pictures of what they want, it can increase their power.
❑ The focus is on the children's perspectives; the photos, which represent the child's perspective, direct the interviews.
❑ By using a language other than verbal language, an attempt is made to build on their strengths. In using a camera to explain what they find important in their daily lives and talk about what they photographed they do not have to rely solely on verbal language.
❑ Children taking pictures to describe their opinions and feelings about their lives are active. They create meaning as they capture meaningful parts in their lives.
❑ Children like taking pictures.
❑ Taking the pictures does not take a long time so the children do not lose interest.
❑ The photographs also provide a concrete product which can be taken home.
❑ Giving the children the responsibility for a camera helps to forge a relationship of trust with the researcher.

Jones and Summer (62) have looked at the particular challenges and opportunities surrounding mixed methods approaches to childhood wellbeing. They suggest that the distinctiveness and complexity of research on childhood wellbeing provides the impetus for a creative mixing of approaches. In particular they argue that the quality and intensity of children's voicelessness underscores the importance of integrating not only observational and ethnographic qualitative methods, but also various oral and visual participatory research approaches. Although numbers are commonly perceived as objective, due to their tangibility, quantifiability, and assumed universality, policy makers also listen to narratives, opening up space for qualitative approaches to also influence policy. This is partly due to the legitimacy or "authenticity" brought by PPAs and other qualitative methods. They suggest that, although quantitative approaches are currently popular with policy makers, qualitative approaches can create stories to "sell".

Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell and Britten (74) look at methodological issues in conducting focus groups with children aged 7–11 years based on their experience of conducting such groups with children to examine their experiences of living with asthma. It discusses the use of child-friendly techniques to promote participation and access children's meanings, and raises issues about the size and composition of groups and recruitment strategies, group dynamics, tensions and sensitive moments. They conclude that focus groups are a valuable method for eliciting children's views and experiences and complement personal interviews, while important questions relate to enhancing children's participation in other stages of the research process.

Waters, Stewart-Brown and Fitzpatrick (107) examine the extent of parent and adolescent agreement on physical, emotional, mental and social health and wellbeing in a representative population. 2096 parent–adolescent dyads (adolescent mean age of 15.1 years, males 50%, maternal parent 83.2%, biological parent 93.5%) were obtained. All adolescents were much less optimistic about their health and well-being than their parents, and were only in close agreement on aspects of health and well-being they rated highly. Adolescent reports are more likely to be sensitive to pain, mental health problems, health in general and the impact of their health on family activities.

In her paper Alison **Clark** (20) reports on her conduct of an international review of literature and practice concerning listening to and consulting with young children in early childhood institutions. She examines understandings of listening and describes methodologies for gathering young children's perspectives, including traditional research methods such as:

❑ Observation
❑ Interviews

❑　Questionnaires

Participatory method are also increasing common.

❑　Structured activities including:
1. Telephones
2. Toys, puppets and dolls

❑　Multi-sensory approaches including
1. Cameras
2. Audio equipment
3. Map making
4. Arts-based activities

Clark points out that listening is time-consuming, particularly when the participants are young children but it is an important challenge to create environments in early childhood provision which respect and listen to practitioners, parents and young children. There is a need for principles on which to base listening and consulting with young children which should preferably be participatory, adaptable, multi-method, reflexive and embedded in practice.

Barker and Weller (10) evaluate their use of different innovative children-centred research techniques, such as photographs, diaries, in-depth interviews and surveys. In some instances the children were consulted in the design of the research methodology. In their own research the authors used photographs, drawing, diaries and questionnaires (with pictorial Likert scales).

Hill, Laybourn and Borland (55) note the increasing number of researchers seeking to carry out studies which engage with children rather than use them as passive sources of data. The authors describe some of the benefits of combining focus group discussions and individual interviews. Examples are given of a range of techniques that proved helpful. The authors comment that researchers talking with groups of children is not a new approach (e.g. Piaget 1959). In the past, however, such conversations were mostly used as a preliminary for piloting ideas to be tested more systematically using other methods. They then go on to discuss how they used a combination of methods in their research based primarily on focus groups. Specifically, each focus group began with a full explanation of the research, and reassurances about confidentiality and the support of parents and teachers. There were *introductions.* Writing names on an adhesive label and trying out the tape-recorder were significant ice-breakers. In another 'warm-up' technique each group member said something easy about themselves (for example, what their interests or pets were). At several points in the discussion *brainstorming* was used as a mechanism to enable the group to list what they saw as the potential issues to be discussed. The authors also employed a number of *visual prompts,* each with a different purpose, but with the overall intention of maximising interest and involvement. For example, outlines of faces showing different expressions helped stimulate the listing of feelings. With more complex sequences of emotions and responses the children were shown *pictorial vignettes,* namely one or more pictures which portrayed a situation with emotional connotations. Children in the groups were also asked to perform short *role plays*. A *self-completion questionnaire* was given to every child who took part in either the group discussions or the individual interviews. The questionnaires included:
1. *sentence completion*—for instance 'I am sad when ...'; 'When I am sad I tell...';
2. *fantasy wishes*—list three things that would make the child really happier;
3. *simple chart*—indicating who the child would ask for help with respect to different kinds of worry or problem they had chosen.

The last task was for children to do a *drawing* on a sheet headed 'MY DRAWING' and otherwise left largely blank. At the bottom, children completed the sentence—'This is a child who is feeling..., because...'.

Sam Frankel (46) outlines ways in which children can be engaged in the research process. He notes the difficulty of designing research for children between nine and eleven years so that the questions are asked in a clear, manageable and unambiguous way. Literacy is a key factor in using self-completion questionnaires with children so he merged this with the idea of face-to-face questionnaires which provide for some dialogue between the researcher and participant. Given that storytelling plays some part in children's lives, whether it is watching films or TV, reading books or listening to a story the authors decided that the children would be asked to listen to an especially designed and made recording, which was scripted in such a way as to engage, explain and equip the children with the

information that they would need to answer the questions. The recording consisted of a scripted programme in which the hosts took the children from one question to the next, introducing new characters along the way. This was played to the children in their classes, which meant that twenty five to thirty children would hear the recording at one time and, whilst listening to it, they were invited to fill in the questionnaire. It meant that it was possible to provide the children with a large amount of information on which a good number of questions could be asked, within a restricted time period.

Samantha **Punch** (89) reflects on the use of a range of interviewing strategies carried out with 13–14-year-olds for a research project about young people's problems and coping strategies. The advantages and disadvantages of using both group and individual interviews with various task-based activities (grouping and ranking exercises, spider diagrams and charts) and stimulus material (problem pages, video clips and common phrases) are examined. The development and use of an innovative technique, the 'secret box', is also discussed. The mix of techniques alongside straightforward questioning was designed to offer variety to engage young people's interest, to account for their different preferences, to stimulate discussion about a potentially sensitive topic and to help to lessen the unequal power relationship between the adult researcher and the young participant.

Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (19) conducted a two-year study of purposefully selected Minnesota families which included interviews with 94 children who either were currently enrolled in or had attended child care programs. Children from 1 to 18 years old recalled playmates, daily activities, schedules, discipline methods, special events, bullies, and characteristics of well-liked and unpopular staff members. Children drew pictures and wrote about activities, child care friends, and child care staff. This study contributes additional insights to the limited literature on children's perceptions of child care.

Angela Underdown (103) writes about a weekend festival organized by The Children's Society in partnership with the YMCA Fairthorne Manor for over 1200 young carers. The project was designed to give a voice to the views of young carers from across the UK. For many young people it was the first time they had met with others with caring responsibilities. Many children and young people reported that they were isolated in their role and felt unable to disclose the challenges they faced because of fear of bullying from other children or of being taken into care by the authorities. The children and young people had very clear messages for professionals and government about how services could work better to support their families. Collectively, they had one over-riding plea: "Please listen to us, believe us, and try to understand". Children related their own experiences to highlight policy issues in relation to education, health and social services.

5.   Summary

Seeking information directly from children about their wellbeing is increasingly common in research conducted not only by academics but also governments and non-government organisations. Questionnaires and interviews continue to be the primary method of choice for obtaining data. The literature, however, is suggesting that these 'tried and true' methods be supplemented by other task-based 'activities' that engage the interest of children. A number of options have been raised in this review. Photographs are popular given the easy use of digital and disposable cameras. Using a script to assist children (of school age) in completion of questionnaires is an interesting approach. Using pictorial Likert scales is also likely to be helpful in the preparation of questionnaires. Draw and tell is another technique although some caution is sounded about its potential short-comings. The use of technology through online surveys and use of message boards have been identified as useful. Drawing on or writing post cards are also techniques that have been used. Role play is also an appropriate activity within the context of a focus group. Open space technology is a good methodology particularly with larger groups. Maps and neighbourhood tours are particularly helpful to get around literacy concerns. Some children may like to keep diaries. With others, particularly younger children, toys and telephones are a way for them to open up.

Nexus has proposed a range of techniques for its research on behalf of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Essentially all of these (see below) have been used in research previously in some form. The literature reviewed will provide a useful guide to ensuring that they are conducted in a way that optimises the usefulness of the information received.

- ❑ Artwork and storytelling (for 5-7-year-olds)
- ❑ Community murals (all ages, 5 - 17) and/or graffiti murals (the latter may be incorporated into our interactive forums for 15-17-year-olds, as a special activity)
- ❑ Interactive forums (with up to one hundred 15-17-year-olds)
- ❑ Bush Walks 'n Talks
- ❑ Disposable cameras (for 15-17-year-olds)
- ❑ Online survey (for 10-17-year-olds)

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS ASKED OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS PART OF THE 'EVERY CHILD MATTERS' REVIEW

WE ASKED (children and young people the following questions)
- ❑ How do you think you should have a say in what your local council does to make things better for children and young people?
- ❑ Apart from education what services would you like to see in your school?
- ❑ How should we spend the Young People's Fund to give young people more and better things to do?
- ❑ How do you think the government can best help families at difficult times?
- ❑ When do you think that services should talk together about a child without the child knowing or saying that it is OK?
- ❑ How do you think children and families should have a say in deciding what extra help they need?
- ❑ What ideas do you have for encouraging people to consider careers that involve working with young children and families, such as social work or childcare?
- ❑ Do you have any suggestions for encouraging people to become foster carers and making sure that they feel good about their work?
- ❑ To help the court decide what punishment to give a young offender, what should it think about?
- ❑ Is an information pack a good way of explaining what happens in court?
- ❑ Is having a special worker for young people in court a good idea?
- ❑ Should judges for young people be specially chosen and trained to deal with young people's crimes?
- ❑ Would the money for training judges be better spent elsewhere?
- ❑ For punishing young people in the community, are the 4 choices below enough for the courts? The choices are:
  - – let go without punishment;
  - – pay a fine;
  - – a community group decides punishment; or
  - – two or three smaller punishments.
- ❑ Is it a good idea to take a young person away from his/her family if they are the reason for his/her involvement in crime?
- ❑ Is it a good idea to keep a young person out of prison if someone keeps an eye on them?
- ❑ Is this fair to victims?
- ❑ If a young person is sent to custody, is a minimum sentence of two months
  1. Too short
  2. Too long
  3. About right

APPENDIX 2: WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN IRELAND — SELF-REPORTED DATA

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS
- ❑ Indicator: RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHERS
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report that they find it easy to talk with their mother when something is really bothering them.
- ❑ Indicator: RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHERS
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report that they find it easy to talk with their father when something is really bothering them.
- ❑ Indicator: TALKING TO PARENTS

Measure: The percentage of children aged 15 who report that their parents spend time just talking with them more than once a week.
- ❑ Indicator: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 15 who report that their parents discuss with them how well they are doing at school more than once a week.
- ❑ Indicator: EATING A MAIN MEAL TOGETHER
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 15 who report that their parents eat a main meal with them around a table more than once a week.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS
- ❑ Indicator: FRIENDSHIPS
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report to have 3 or more friends of the same gender.
- ❑ Indicator: PETS AND ANIMALS
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report having a pet of their own or a pet in their family.
- ❑ Indicator: BULLYING
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report to have been bullied at school.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES
- ❑ Indicator: PARTICIPATION IN MAKING THE SCHOOL RULES
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report students at their school participate in making the school rules.
- ❑ Indicator: READING AS A LEISURE ACTIVITY
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 15 who report that reading is one of their favourite hobbies.
- ❑ Indicator: SELF-ESTEEM
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report feeling happy 'always' or 'very often' with the way they are.
- ❑ Indicator: SELF-REPORTED HAPPINESS
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report being happy with their lives
- ❑ Indicator: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on more than 2 days per week and on more than 4 days per week.
- ❑ Indicator: PERCEIVED SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report feeling safe in the area where they live.
- ❑ Indicator: ENVIRONMENT AND PLACES
  Measure: The percentage of children aged 9-17 who report there are good places in their area to spend their free time.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILD WELLBEING DEVELOPED FOR USE BY CHARITIES (UNITED KINGDOM)

Domains
- ❑ Physical
- ❑ Psychological
- ❑ Behaviour
- ❑ School
- ❑ Family
- ❑ Friends
- ❑ Resilience
- ❑ Material
- ❑ Living environment
- ❑ Subjective

The questionnaire
Each questionnaire began with the text:

'This is a survey about issues that affect your life. **This is NOT a test** – there are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will only be used for evaluating programmes – not for evaluating or reporting on you as an

individual. This questionnaire is **anonymous** (please don't put your name on the questionnaire) and **confidential** (we won't know who you are and will not pass on any information you give us). You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.'

These are the questions used in both pilot studies

Question	Domain
Do you feel fit and well?	Physical wellbeing
Have you been physically active (e.g. running, climbing, biking)?	Physical wellbeing
How often have you felt depressed?	Psychological wellbeing
Do you forget things?	Psychological wellbeing
Do you worry about your family?	Psychological wellbeing
Do you worry about school?	Psychological wellbeing
Do you worry about your future?	Psychological wellbeing
Have you been in a good mood?	Psychological wellbeing
Do you care about other people's feelings?	Behaviour
Do you get very angry and often lose your temper?	Behaviour
Have you been drunk more than twice (in the past 2 months)?	Behaviour
Have you used cannabis?	Behaviour
Have you had unprotected sex?	Behaviour
Do you like being in school?	School
Do you feel safe at this school?	School
Do you feel you belong at this school?	School
Have you been bullied?	School
Do you have trouble keeping up with your school work?	School
I have a happy home life	Family
I have a lot of arguments with my parents	Family
My parents spend time just talking to me	Family
I am happy at home	Family
My parents are interested in what happens to me at school	Family
There are lots of fun things to do where I live	Living environment
This town is filled with unfriendly people	Living environment
I like my neighbourhood	Living environment
I wish I lived in a different house	Living environment
Do you find the students in your class kind and helpful?	Friends
Do you play alone and keep to yourself?	Friends
Do you have fun with your friends?	Friends
Do you usually find something to laugh about?	Resilience
Can you usually find a way out, when you are in a difficult situation?	Resilience
Do you have enough money for your expenses?	Material
Do you have enough money to do things with your friends?	Material
Here is a picture of a ladder, the top of the ladder, 10, is the best possible life for you, and the bottom, 0, is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment?	Subjective well-being
I am happy the way I am	Subjective well-being
I am worried about the way I look	Subjective well-being

I would change things in my life	Subjective well-being
I feel I do everything badly	Subjective well-being
Do you have: • Desk for study • Quiet place to work • Computer for school work • Educational software • Internet connection • Calculator • Dictionary, or • School textbooks?	Material
Are any of your parent(s)/guardian(s) employed?	Material
What do you think are the most important things that make a good life for young people?	Open ended
Who is important to you and why?	
Is there anything else you would like to add?	

APPENDIX 4: METHODS IN CHILD FOCUSED STUDIES

Table 1 Examples of child-focused studies combining methods (Crivello et al.)

Author	Sample group	Topic	Methods
Clark and Moss (2001)	3–4-year olds and children for whom English is an additional language in England	Young children's perspectives on their daily lives and care services	Observation, child conferencing, cameras, tours and mapping
Darbyshire et al. (2005)	4–12-year olds in Australia	Children's perceptions and experiences of place, space, and physical activity in relation to childhood obesity	Focus group interviews with mapping and photo elicitation
Frankel (2007)	9–11-year olds in east England	Children's understandings of morality within their everyday lives	Scripted radio clips with questionnaire exercises, interviews and diaries
Harpham et al. (2005)	7–11-year olds in rural Vietnam	Perceptions of the causes and consequences of child poverty in rural Vietnam	Children's drawing, daily timetables, mobility maps, Venn diagrams and group discussions
Hill et al. (1996)	5–12-year olds in Scotland	Children's understandings of the influences on their wellbeing	Focus-group discussions with a number of visual prompts, picture stories, role play, self-completion questionnaires, drawings and individual interviews.
Morrow (2001)	12–15-year olds in southeast England	Explore their daily lives and the relevance of certain places for their social relationships	Children's photographs, mapping, drawing, essays and group sessions
Punch (2002b)	8–14-year olds in rural Bolivia	How children negotiate relationships of interdependence as they grow up	Drawing, photographs, PRA techniques, diaries, worksheets and observations
Tekola (2007)	10–14-year olds in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	How poor children evaluate the impact of living in poverty on their wellbeing	Diaries, drawings, timelines, semi-structured interviews

Veale (2005)	7–17-year olds in postgenocide rural Rwanda	Impact of violence on social relations as it impacted on children	Social mapping, drawing, story games and drama
Woodhead (1999, 2001)	8–16-year olds in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Philippines, and Central American States	Working children's perspectives on the hazards and benefits of their work, as well as school and family relationships	Based on the 'Children's Perspectives Protocol' comprising a series of group based activities including drawing, ranking, scenario creation, and role play

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    ❑ATC - Children at work -- *20 Jun 2005*
    ❑ATC – Education -- *6 Jun 2005*
    ❑ATC - Young drivers -- *17 May 2005*
    ❑ATC - Issues important to kids -- *27 Jul 2004*
    ❑ATC - Young people talk alcohol -- *4 Apr 2004*
    ❑ATC - Immigration detention -- *4 Mar 2003*
    ❑ATC - Kids talk about getting help -- *29 Oct 2002*
    ❑ATC - Prescription and over the counter medications -- *7 Jan 2002*

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Attachment 6(a): Analysis of the Perth Forum

There were 40 participants in the Perth forum held on Sunday 29th November 2009. Their details are as follows:

Gender: Boys: 21   Girls: 19

Age: 14 years   1
               15 years   18
               16 years   12
               17 years   9

Organisations: Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club   9
               Methodist Ladies' College   6
               Government senior high school in Perth   14
               Youth representatives (YACs)   2
               CBC Fremantle   3
               West Perth Football Club   5
               Child living in long-term (successful)
                   foster care   1

During the forum, the participants were asked to do a variety of activities that elicited their thoughts and ideas on aspects of wellbeing. The activities included group discussions, voting sessions, mini-surveys, and the creation of banners and a DVD.

The findings from the forum are summarised below.

Group Discussion Findings

The 40 participants were divided into six groups, each with a facilitator. They were asked "What really matters to young people and why?" The responses were many and varied:

- Beach, environment
- Education, school, academic achievements, study
- Sport, exercise, fitness
- Footy
- Friends, support network, belonging
- Activities, things to do, hobbies, recreation
- Jobs-career-money
- Family, parents, family support
- Safe environment, feeling safe
- Public transport
- Competition
- Direction
- Self-confidence – physical image
- Socialising, social networking, parties, social events
- Technology
- Money, finances, youth allowances, financial independence, self-sufficiency
- Food
- Music
- Freedom and independence – freedom of speech, freedom to decide how we spend our time, less restrictions
- Less homework
- Stress – school results, parents, competitive sports
- Balance
- Daylight saving
- Opposite gender, sexuality
- Fancy colours
- Cars and public transport
- Being heard (teachers, parents, friends, peers, siblings)
- Having resources available

- Support for youth, support structures in community
- Sporting venues
- Role models, respect – coaches, teachers, family, friends, associates, business people, public figures, politicians, sporting icons
- Positive, negative peer pressure
- Food, water, hygiene, basic living standards
- Responsibility
- Good future
- Self-confidence
- Pushing boundaries

When asked to identify the three things from this list that mattered most to them, the three that won the most votes were:
- Friends, support networks, belonging
- Sport, exercise, fitness
- Freedom and independence.

Having identified these three things, the participants were asked to:
- identify whether there were any barriers stopping them from getting these things
- indicate what young people can do to make sure that these thing actually happen or that they're promoted and happen more
- indicate adults, organisations and governments can do to help young people have more of these things.

Their responses are summarised below.

THEME	BARRIERS	WHAT CAN YOUNG PEOPLE DO?	WHAT CAN ADULTS, ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS DO?
Friends and support networks	Controlling parents, ethnicity, being in a relationship, peer pressure, having different interests, study/work/sporting commitments, location/transport issues, social status, lack of money, lack of access to technology/social networking sites (or lack of awareness of them), religion, language barriers, appearance, image, shyness and lack of self-confidence, personality issues	Join groups or make your own group(s), be supportive, give ideas/info info, do surveys/petitions, support what government comes up with, be active, communicate, reduce social barriers	Create and fund groups/clubs, ensure there are avenues for young people to access support groups, listen, create opportunities for youths to voice their opinions (more youth forums), re-create the image of youth, facilitate youth involvement alongside adults, make things cheaper for young people, keep out of our business
Sport, exercise and fitness	Transportation issues, financial costs, socio-economic factors, inadequate facilities and equipment, physical limitations, lack of role models, geographic isolation, parental restrictions, and study	Participate more, train harder, join a club, fundraise, and ask your friends to join up	Provide more funding to clubs and individuals (e.g. scholarships), advertise sport more, and provide more facilities (or improve existing facilities)
Freedom and independence	Parents' rules/lack of trust, schoolwork, jobs, money, location, transport, police and government, laws (e.g. driving age, drinking age), other responsibilities, friends, religion, health and disability, age	Get involved, speak up, move out, get a job, get a car, take advantage of opportunities, have goals, communicate well, develop good relationships with parents	Reduce school hours (or organise school day better), increase sports/arts options, reduce homework, reduce laws and age restrictions, reward good behaviour, just punish the kids who do the wrong thing (not everyone), listen more to students, provide more social support for

			lower socio-economic areas, give more financial help to students

Mini-Surveys

During the afternoon, the participants were invited to respond to three mini-surveys. Copies of these surveys are provided at Attachment 6(b) and a summary of participants' responses is provided at Attachment 6(c).

Banners and DVD

Towards the end of the forum, the young people were given a choice of making a video or creating some banners to illustrate their views on three basic questions:

- What really matters to us?
- What do we need more of?
- What do we need less of?

The banners they produced read…

WHAT WE NEED LESS OF…	WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO US…	WHAT WE NEED MORE OF…
Meeting other people's expectations	Belonging	Peace and love
Spoon-feeding	Equality	Trust
Boredom	Music	Fun
Being educational guinea pigs	Independence	Daylight saving
Old politicians choosing what we want	Support and love	Love
Conflict	Having someone who listens when I talk	Progress
Pressure	Fitness	Sleep
Control	Sport	Individuals
Self-abuse	Socialising	Happiness
Stereotypes and labels	Friendship	More educational opportunities
Family stress	Chasing our dreams	Waves
Restrictions	Freedom	Time

The DVD reflected similar themes.

Attachment 6(b): Perth Forum Mini-Surveys

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Perth Forum, Sunday 29 November 2009

This is a confidential questionnaire. You don't have to answer all the questions but it would be really helpful if you do. We don't need to know your name but would like to know your age and gender:

My age is: …………..   I am   Male / Female *(circle appropriate answer)*

Q1: What do your friends do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?
………
………
………
………

Q2: What do your friends do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not</u> valued/appreciated?
………
………
………
………

Q3: What do your parents (mother or father; or both) do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?
………
………
………
………
………

Q4: What do your parents (mother or father; or both) do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not</u> valued/appreciated?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q5: What do your teachers do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q6: What do your teachers do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not </u>valued/appreciated?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q7: Who do you admire? Please choose three people (eg parents, friends, brothers, sisters, other family members, coach, famous singers, actors – whomever you like) and say what you admire about them:

1. Who? …………………………………………………………………………………..

What?…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Who? …………………………………………………………………………………

What?…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Who? …………………………………………………………………………………

What?…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

THANK YOU

MyVoice

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Perth Forum, Sunday 29 November 2009

This is a confidential questionnaire. You don't have to answer all the questions but it would be really helpful if you do. We don't need to know your name but would like to know your age and gender:

My age is: …………..   I am Male / Female *(circle appropriate answer)*

Q1: Thinking about what you need to be able to live a full life, what really matters <u>to you</u> that hasn't been raised during the Forum so far? And, why does it matter to you?
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q2: Thinking back to when you were younger, what do you think <u>children</u> need to be able to live a full life? Please name as many things as you can:
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q3: Why are these things important to children?
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q4: Thinking about yourself now, has peer group pressure been a problem for you? If 'Yes",
what have you felt pressured to do?

……

……

……

……

Q5: What would help children or young people cope better with peer group pressure?

……

……

……

……

Q6: Is bullying a significant problem for you? If "Yes", please describe briefly what
happens or happened:

……

……

……

……

Q7: Did you tell anyone about it, and were they able to help?

……

……

……

……

Q8: What suggestions can you make for how bullying can be stopped?

……

……

……

……

……

THANK YOU

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

Perth Forum, Sunday 29 November 2009

This is a confidential questionnaire. You don't have to answer all the questions but it would be really helpful if you do. We don't need to know your name but would like to know your age and gender:

My age is: …………..   I am Male / Female *(circle appropriate answer)*

Q1: Do you have enough say in decisions affecting you? If "No" please say in which areas of your life you would like to have more say:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q2: In your family, do people listen to your ideas and take them seriously?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q3: Do your friends listen to your ideas and take them seriously?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q4: What concerns or worries do you have? Please number them, in order of importance to you:

1…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

2……………………………………………………………………………………………………

3……………………………………………………………………………………………………

4……………………………………………………………………………………………………

5……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q5: How much influence do you have over these concerns or worries?

……

……

……

Q6: What are the three best things about your life, at the moment?

1……………………………………………………………………………………………………

2……………………………………………………………………………………………………

3……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q7: What, if anything, would you like to change about your life in the following areas?

Home

……

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

School

……

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Friends

……

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Health/Fitness

……

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Neighbourhood

……

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Other (please choose other areas of your life where you would like to make changes)

……

……

……

THANK YOU

Attachment 6(c): Results of the Perth Forum Mini-Surveys

During the forum, the participants were also asked to complete three hard copy mini-surveys exploring various topics such as:

- What makes you feel appreciated?
- Who do you admire?
- Do you have enough say in decisions that affect you?
- Do people take your views seriously?
- What concerns do you have?
- What's good about your life?
- What would you like to change?
- What do children need to live a full life?
- Has peer pressure or bullying been an issue for you?

Copies of the mini-surveys are provided at Attachment 6(b).

A summary of the participants' responses to the three surveys is provided below.

MINI-SURVEY 1

Q: What do your friends do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?
The top two responses were:
1st	Give me compliments
2nd	Include me/invite me to go places

Q: What do your friends do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not</u> valued/appreciated?
The top three comments/responses were:
Equal 1st	Ignore me, don't respect me (or my decisions)
Equal 1st	Insult me, put me down, criticise me
3rd	Don't include me in things

Q: What do your parents (mother or father; or both) do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?
The top two comments were:
Equal 1st	Compliment you, congratulate you
Equal 1st	Help you, support you, always be there for you

Q: What do your parents (mother or father; or both) do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not</u> valued/appreciated?
The top four comments were:
Equal 1st	Restrict freedom, don't let me go out
Equal 1st	Get angry, tell me off
Equal 1st	Ignore me, don't listen to me
4th	Criticise me

Q: What do your teachers do/say that makes you feel valued/appreciated?
The top two responses were:
1st	Compliment you, congratulate you
2nd	Encouragement, advice, support, help

Q: What do your teachers do/say that makes you feel you are <u>not</u> valued/appreciated?
The top three responses were:
1st	Being disrespectful, disregarding my views, treat me like a kid, don't listen, ignore me, being unfriendly
2nd	Get angry, yell, tell me off

3rd   Put me down/criticise me/make fun of me

Q: Who do you admire?
The top two responses were:
1st   Friends
2nd   Mum, Dad, parents

The main reasons they cited for admiring their friends were:
- Can rely on them, always there for me, support and encourage me
- Personality, awesomeness
- Enjoy their company, make you feel good, help you relax and have fun
- Nice, friendly, easy to talk to

The main reasons they cited for admiring their parents were:
- They care about me, support me, help me, always there for me, find time for me
- Provide for the family, feed me
- Give me things to improve on in my life, want me to do well
- They have achieved a lot
- Make me feel I can do anything

MINI-SURVEY 2

Q. Thinking back to when you were younger, what do you think <u>children</u> need to be able to live a full life?
The top six responses were:
1st   Family (good, loving, supportive, encouraging)
Equal 2nd Friends
Equal 2nd Education, schools
4th   Fun, playing, toys, playgrounds, no complex things
5th   Sport and fitness, activities, hobbies
6th   Role models

Q. Thinking about yourself, has peer group pressure been a problem for you?
- 19 said 'no'
- 11 said 'yes'
- 4 said 'yes and no' or 'yes in the past, but not now'
- 1 was non-committal

Of the 11 who said 'yes' or 'yes and no', the main things they said that they had been pressured to do were:
- Drink alcohol
- Look good, wear expensive clothes, wear make-up
- Do bad things, be bad
- Study less
- Go partying

Q: What would help children or young people cope better with peer group pressure?
The top four responses were:
1st Build self-confidence, self-esteem that would help people say 'no' and to make their own decisions (12 comments)
2nd Provide support (8 comments)
3rd Encouragement to accept yourself as an individual (just as you are), to appreciate yourself (7 comments)
4th Find good friends (5 comments)

Q: Is bullying a significant problem for you?
- 24 said 'no'

- 6 said 'yes'
- 4 said bullying was not an issue for them any more

Of the six who said 'yes' and the four who said that bullying was no longer an issue for them, nine commented on the form that the bullying takes/took:

- *"The bullies thought I was weak and couldn't or wouldn't do anything."*
- *"Bullying effects the growth of the child's mind, leading them to become introverted and have a very low self-esteem and lack of confidence, possibly leading to extreme cases of violence."*
- *"Only in the outside community with crews walking around tagging and bushing people and never being in trouble."*
- *"I was bullied because I play softball and people think that all softballers are lesbian"*
- *"I have had things stolen and broken… I go to an all-girls' school and they can be really mean."*
- *"People treated me badly and encouraged others to join in."*
- *"Verbal and cyberbullying by girls at primary and high school about my body figure and how I'm "too nice" and have "too many problems."*
- *"When I was younger (about Year 9ish) I had a group of 'friends' who were not particularly supportive."*
- *"I have been ignored, un-included, talked about and degraded."*

Q: Did you tell anyone about it, and were they able to help?
Of the six who had been bullied, four were girls and two were boys. The two boys do not appear to have told anybody about it. All four girls, however, had told someone, with mixed success.

Of the four who reported having been bullied in the past, one was a boy and three were girls. The boy did not tell anyone about it. The three girls had all told someone, again with mixed success.

Q: What suggestions can you make for how bullying can be stopped?
The three top responses were:
1. Tell someone about it and get support. Get support from:
   - Councillors
   - Teachers
   - Friends
   - Parents
   - Support groups
2. Raise awareness, have more regular discussions on bullying at school, run anti-bullying campaigns, provide info on how not to be bullied etc
3. Punishment for bullies, harsher penalties, corporal punishment, zero tolerance

MINI-SURVEY 3

Q: Do you have enough say in decisions affecting you?
- 24 said 'yes'
- 12 said 'no'
- 3 said 'yes and no'

There were gender differences in the responses to this question. 15 of the 20 boys said 'yes', but only 9 of the 19 girls who responded said 'yes'.

The young people who answered 'yes' were asked what they would like more say in. Although 12 responded, no major themes emerged. The comments included school work, social events, subject choice, family life, career choices, financial independence, where to live, everyday things, junior rates of pay.

Q: In your family, do people listen to your ideas and take them seriously?
- 23 said 'yes' (13 boys, 10 girls)

- 5 said 'no' (1 boy, 4 girls)
- 5 said 'sometimes' (2 boys, 3 girls)
- 3 said 'yes and no' (2 boys, 1 girl)
- 2 said 'mostly/often' (1 boy, 1 girl)

N.B. The gender breakdown is reported for the above question and also for the question below because the boys reported being taken more seriously by their family than by their friends, while the reverse was true for the girls.

Q: Do your friends listen to your ideas and take them seriously?
- 21 said 'yes' (9 boys, 12 girls)
- 2 said 'no' (2 boys, 0 girls)
- 8 said 'sometimes' (4 boys, 4 girls)
- 6 said 'mostly /often' (3 boys, 3 girls)
- 2 said 'yes' and 'no' (2 boys, 0 girls)

Q: What concerns or worries do you have?
The top response was 'education' (with 29 votes). Next was money/financial independence (with 13 comments). Various other concerns were identified such as getting the job I want, family, doing well, relationships, and getting sick or dying.

Q: How much influence do you have over these concerns or worries?
- 17 said 'a lot'
- 6 said 'not a lot'
- 4 said 'quite a lot'
- 3 said 'some/a bit'
- 2 gave mixed responses – a lot for some things, not a lot for others
- 1 said 'none'

Q: What are the three best things about your life at the moment?
The most common response was friends (with 26 votes). Next was family (with 18 votes). Other 'best things' were holidays, sport/fitness, freedom, and education.

Q: What, if anything, would you like to change about your life in the following areas? (home, school, friends, health/fitness, neighbourhood, other)?

Home: The top response was 'more freedom/more trust/more independence/fewer rules'.

School: Many did not respond to this question and no common theme emerged.

Friends: The top response was 'to make more friends'.

Health/Fitness: The top response was 'to get fitter/do more exercise'.

Neighbourhood: The top response was 'to have more people my age'.

Other: Most did not respond to this question and no comment was made more than once.

Attachment 7: Hard Copy Survey

'MyVoice': A research project where children and young people talk about feeling good and being able to live their lives to the full

The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants to hear your ideas on how the lives of WA's children and young people can be improved.

Please tell us **YOUR** ideas by answering the following questions. Thank you!

Your first name: _____   **School:** _____

Age: _____ years   **Are you   Male?** or   **Female?** (please circle)

Have you completed a consent form?   Yes   No (please circle)

Q1:   What do you wish for (or hope for) in your life, both now and in the future?
Now:_____
_____
_____
_____

Future:_____
_____
_____
_____

Q2:   If you could achieve your wishes or hopes, how would that <u>make you feel</u>?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q3:   Is there anything that might <u>stop you</u> achieving your wishes or hopes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q4:   What could <u>you</u> do more of to help achieve your wishes or hopes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q5:   What could <u>adults or the government</u> do more of to help achieve your wishes or hopes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q6:   What do adults <u>need to know</u> about you and other young people to help you live your lives to the full?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If you have any other comments to add, please write them here

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for your time!

Please give this form back to your teacher who will pass it on to the 'MyVoice' research team.

Attachment 8(a): The 'MyVoice' Online survey

This is a survey about you and your views. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, just your opinions. So go ahead and answer the questions as honestly as you can.

First, tell us about you…

1.	What is your gender?	-choose- ▾
		-choose-
		Female
		Male

2.	How old are you?	-choose- ▾
		-choose-
		10
		11
		12
		13
		14
		15
		16
		17

3.	I am..	-choose- ▾
	Other? please explain:	-choose-
		..in Year 4 at school
		..in Year 5 at school
		..in Year 6 at school
		..in Year 7 at school
		..in Year 8 at school
		..in Year 9 at school
		..in Year 10 at school
		..in Year 11 at school
		..in Year 12 at school
		..at TAFE
		..at University
		..at Ag. College
		..employed
		Other

4. Where do you live?
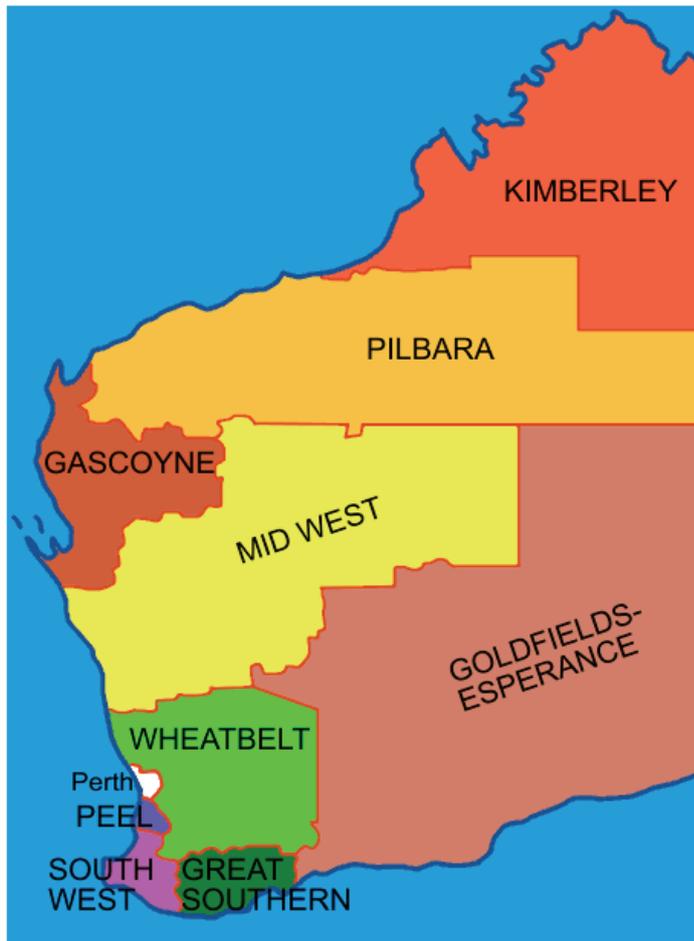
-choose a region here or click on the map above-

-choose a region here or click on the map above-
Gascoyne (eg. Carnarvon, Exmouth, Denham, Coral Bay)
Goldfields-Esperance (eg. Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Leonora, Menzies)
Great Southern (eg. Albany, Denmark, Katanning, Kojonup, Jerramungup)
Kimberley (eg. Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra)
Mid West (eg. Geraldton-Greenough, Three Springs, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Morawa)
Peel (eg. Mandurah, Pinjarra, Waroona, Boddington)
Perth
Pilbara (eg. Port Hedland, Karratha, Newman, Marble Bar)
South-West (eg. Bunbury, Collie, Manjimup, Augusta, Margaret River)
Wheatbelt (eg. Northam, Narrogin, Merredin, Moora)

5. Are you in foster care?

-choose-

-choose-
No
Yes

6. Do you have a disability?

-choose-

-choose-
Yes
No

(check as many boxes as you need) Physical: ☐ Sensory: ☐ Intellectual: ☐
Neurological: ☐ Cognitive: ☐ Psychiatric: ☐

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

7. I am happy with my life right now   -choose- ▼

                                      -choose-
                                      Agree

8. I have to follow too many rules   Disagree

9. I have enough time to do the things that interest me   Not sure

10. I need more opportunity to work things out for myself   -choose- ▼

11. I have enough good friends   -choose- ▼

12. I think my parents expect too much of me   -choose- ▼

13. I can't do much to change my life   -choose- ▼

14. I go along with my friends in order to be popular   -choose- ▼

15. I would like to spend more time with my family   -choose- ▼

16. I have too much stress/worry in my life   -choose- ▼

17. I feel loved and cared for   -choose- ▼

18. I feel upset when my friends don't get along   -choose- ▼

19. If I work hard, I will achieve my goals   -choose- ▼

20. I find peer group pressure difficult to resist   -choose- ▼

21. I feel that people listen to what I have to say   -choose- ▼

22. I have everything I really need   -choose- ▼

23. I get worried when my friends have problems   -choose- ▼

24. I feel I can make a difference in the world   -choose- ▼

25. I would like more say in decisions affecting me   -choose- ▼

26. How often do you feel happy?   -choose- ▼

                                    -choose-
                                    Most of the time
                                    Some of the time
                                    Hardly ever

27. If you have a problem or are worried about something, is there someone you can talk to about it?   -choose- ▼

                                      -choose-
                                      Yes
                                      No
                                      Prefer to keep it to myself

Who are the main people you talk to?
(check as many boxes as you need)

Mum/Dad: ☐   Aunty/Uncle: ☐   Grandparent: ☐

Brother/Sister: ☐   Cousin: ☐   Friend/Friends: ☐

Teacher: ☐   Counsellor: ☐

Other: ☐

28. Have you ever been bullied?   -choose- ▼

                                      -choose-
                                      Yes
                                      No

When did this happen?   -choose- ▼

                                      -choose-
                                      In the last month
                                      In the last year
                                      Before that

29. Have you ever bullied someone else?

-choose-
-choose-
Yes
No

When did this happen?

-choose-
In the last month
In the last year
Before that

30. Do you use public transport?

-choose-
-choose-
Yes
No

How safe do you feel when using public transport in the day?

-choose-
-choose-
Always feel safe
Sometimes feel scared/threatened
Often feel scared/threatened
I don't use public transport during the day

How safe do you feel when using public transport at night?

-choose-
-choose-
Always feel safe
Sometimes feel scared/threatened
Often feel scared/threatened
I don't use public transport at night

31. How safe do you feel at school or TAFE?

-choose-
-choose-
Always feel safe
Sometimes feel scared/threatened
Often feel scared/threatened
I don't go to school/TAFE

32. How safe do you feel at home?

-choose-
-choose-
Always feel safe
Sometimes feel scared/threatened
Often feel scared/threatened

33. How safe do you feel in the local community?

34. How safe do you feel at parties/gatherings?

35. How safe do you feel at sporting events?

-choose-

36. How safe do you feel in places where there are lots of young people?

-choose-

37. How do feel about the home in which you live?

-choose-
-choose-
Really good
Good
Not so good

38. How much trust do you think the adults you know have in children and young people?

-choose-
-choose-
A lot
Not much
Very little

39. How much trust do you think adults generally have in children and young people?

40. How much trust do you think children and young people have in the adults they know?

-choose-

41. How much trust do you think children and young people have in adults generally?

-choose-

You're almost finished. Three questions to go..

42. What does "wellbeing" mean to you?
It is ok to say "not sure" or "don't know"

43. What is the main thing in your life you would like to change?

44. What are the three best things about your life?

1.

2.

3.

Thank you for answering the questions. We would like to have asked more questions but there wasn't space to include everything that's important to you. So, if you would like to add some comments, please type them here:

Please tell your friends about this survey and ask them to fill it out!

http://myvoice.nexussolutions.com.au/MyVoiceSurvey.php

Now, you don't have to answer every question if you don't want to, but if you think you *have* answered everything, you can tell for sure by clicking on this button:

SUBMIT MY ANSWERS

Attachment 8(b): The 'MyVoice' Survey Results

Total sample size: 582

Table 1: Age and Gender

Age Gender	Male	Female	Nil response	Freq (%)
10	11 (3.5)	9 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	20 (3.4)
11	25 (7.9)	29 (11.4)	2 (22.2)	56 (9.6)
12	26 (8.2)	35 (13.7)	0 (0.0)	61 (10.5)
13	61 (19.2)	44 (17.3)	0 (0.0)	105 (18.0)
14	106 (33.3)	71 (27.8)	0 (0.0)	177 (30.4)
15	74 (23.3)	44 (17.3)	0 (0.0)	118 (20.3)
16	9 (2.8)	14 (5.5)	0 (0.0)	23 (4.0)
17	5 (1.6)	9 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	14 (2.4)
Nil response	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	7 (77.8)	8 (1.4)
Totals	318 (54.6)	255 (43.8)	9 (1.5)	582 (100)

Table 2: Occupation

Occupation	Freq (%)
Year 4	11 (1.9)
Year 5	23 (4.0)
Year 6	65 (11.2)
Year 7	32 (5.5)
Year 8	93 (16.0)
Year 9	181 (31.1)
Year 10	121 (20.8)
Year 11	24 (4.1)
Year 12	7 (1.2)
TAFE	3 (0.5)
University	5 (0.9)
Agricultural College	3 (0.5)
Employed	1 (0.2)
Other	2 (0.3)
Nil response	11 (1.9)

Table 3: Region of Residence

Region	Freq (%)
Gascoyne	1 (0.2)
Goldfield–Esperance	26 (4.5)
Great Southern	1 (0.2)
Kimberley	2 (0.3)
Mid West	36 (6.2)
Peel	29 (5.0)
Perth	451 (77.5)
Pilbara	7 (1.2)
South-West	5 (0.9)
Wheatbelt	8 (1.4)
Nil response	16 (2.7)

Table 4: Special Needs

	Foster care Freq (%)	Disability Freq (%)	If yes, nature of disability*	Freq (%)
Yes	25 (4.3)	45 (7.7)		
No	546 (93.8)	531 (91.2)		
Nil response	11 (1.9)	6 (1.0)		
			Physical	21 (46.7)
			Sensory	14 (31.1)
			Intellectual	28 (62.2)
			Neurological	17 (37.8)

	Cognitive	16 (35.6)
	Psychiatric	16 (35.6)

* There are overlaps in respondents in each category

Table 5: Statements about Life (%)

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Nil response
7 I am happy with my life	72.0	9.3	18.4	0.3
8 I have to follow too many rules	40.0	41.4	17.9	0.7
9 I have enough time to do the things that interest me	63.2	22.3	13.1	1.4
10 I need more opportunity to work things out for myself	48.8	30.4	19.9	0.9
11 I have enough good friends	85.7	6.9	6.7	0.7
12 I think my parents expect too much of me	30.8	50.9	17.9	0.5
13 I can't do much to change my life	26.1	54.6	18.9	0.3
14 I go along with my friends in order to be popular	16.2	70.8	12.7	0.3
15 I would like to spend more time with my family	55.5	24.2	19.9	0.3
16 I have too much stress/worry in my life	36.6	42.6	19.8	1.0
17 I feel loved and cared for	78.5	10.0	11.0	0.5
18 I feel upset when my friends don't get along	55.3	26.1	17.7	0.9
19 If I work hard I will achieve my goals	78.7	9.5	10.8	1.0
20 I find peer group pressures difficult to resist.	21.5	52.7	25.3	0.5
21 I feel that people listen to what I have to say	51.7	20.8	26.8	0.7
22 I have everything I really need	58.2	25.3	15.6	0.9
23 I get worried when my friends have problems	66.2	19.2	14.1	0.5
24 I feel I can make a difference in the world	48.6	24.9	25.6	0.9
25 I would like more say in decisions affecting my life	62.0	13.9	22.9	1.2

Table 6: Happiness Frequency

How often do you feel happy?	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Nil response
	62.4	28.9	7.7	1.0

Table 7: Problem Support

If you have a problem or are worried about something, is there someone you can talk to about it?	Yes	No	Prefer to keep it to myself	Nil
	60.3	9.1	29.6	1.0

If yes, I speak to...	%
Mum/Dad	72.6
Aunty/Uncle	18.2
Grandparent	19.1
Brother/Sister	39.6
Cousin	21.7
Friend	70.7
Teacher	21.1
Counsellor	7.1

* There are overlaps in respondents in each category

Table 8: Bullying

	Yes	Last month	Last year	Before that	Nil	No	Nil
Have you ever been bullied	60.8					37.8	1.4
		26.0	25.1	47.2	1.7		
Have you ever bullied someone else?	44.3					54.5	1.2
		33.3	24.0	40.7	1.9		

* 188 children (32.3% of total sample) responded 'yes' to both bullying questions

Table 9: Public Transport

	Yes	Always feel safe	Sometimes feel scared/ threatened	Often feel scared/ threatened	N/A	Nil	No	Nil
Use public transport	59.8						38.0	2.2
	Safe during the day	62.9	29.9	5.7	1.4	0.0		
	Safe during the night	21.3	26.4	12.9	39.1	0.3		

Table 10: Feeling Safe

	Always feel safe	Sometimes feel scared/threatened	Often feel scared/threatened	N/A	Nil
At school or TAFE	72.7	19.4	5.2	1.7	1.0
At home	81.6	13.7	3.6	-	1.0
Local community	56.0	36.4	6.0	-	1.5
Parties/gatherings	70.8	23.2	4.5	-	1.5
Sporting events	74.1	20.3	4.0	-	1.7
Places where there are lots of young people	64.3	29.6	4.5	-	1.7

Table 11: Your Home

	Really good	Good	Not so good	Nil
How do you feel about the home in which you live?	56.7	33.2	9.1	1.0

Table 12: Young people and Trust

	A lot	Not much	Very little	Nil
How much trust do you think adults you know have in children and young people?	53.8	36.9	7.4	1.9
How much trust do you think adults generally have in children and young people?	32.6	51.4	14.6	1.4
How much trust do you think children and young people have in adults they know?	64.1	27.1	7.4	1.4
How much trust do you think children and young people have in adults generally?	44.0	41.8	12.7	1.5

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Attachment 8(c): Survey Results – Detailed Analysis of the Cross-Tabulations

Variations Between Groups

To determine whether there were any significant attitudinal differences between the different groups of children and young people who completed the survey, the following breakdowns of the quantitative data were conducted:

- boys/girls
- country/city
- primary school/high school
- Indigenous/non-Indigenous.

Differences of more than 5% in relation to any question are reported in this section. Differences of over 10% are shown in **blue** and differences of over 20% are shown in **orange**.

Statements about Life (%)

	Agree – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
I am happy with my life	72.0	-	-	78.3% of country agreed vs 70.1% of metro students	-
I have to follow too many rules	40.0	43.7% of boys agreed vs 35.3% of girls	**42.5% of high school students agreed vs 32.1% of primary students**	41.5% of metro students agreed vs 33% of country students	48.6% of Indigenous agreed vs 39.5% of non-Indigenous
I have enough time to do the things that interest me	63.2	-	-	69.6% of country students agreed vs 61.4% of metro students	70.3% of Indigenous agreed vs 62.9% of non-Indigenous
I need more opportunity to work things out for myself	48.8	-	-	-	-
I have enough good friends	85.7	-	-	-	-
I think my parents expect too much of me	30.8	-	32.6% of high school students agreed vs 23.7% of primary students	**34.6% of metro students agreed vs 13.9% of country students**	-
I can't do much to change my life	26.1	-	32.1% of primary students agreed vs 23.2% of high school students	-	-
I go along with my friends in order to be popular	16.2	-	**23.7% of primary students agreed vs 13.6% of high school students**	-	-
I would like to spend more time with my family	55.5	60.8% of girls agreed vs 50.9% of boys	63.4% of primary students agreed vs 53.5% of high school students	62.6% of country students agreed vs 53.4% of metro students	62.2% of Indigenous agreed vs 55% of non-Indigenous
I have too much stress/worry in my life	36.6	-	**39.9% of high school students**	37.5% of metro students agreed	-

	Agree – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
			agreed vs 26% of primary students	vs 32.2% of country students	
I feel loved and cared for	78.5	-	-	-	67.6% of Indigenous agreed vs 79.4% of non-Indigenous
I feel upset when my friends don't get along	55.3	71.4% of girls agreed vs 42.1% of boys	64.1% of primary students agreed vs 52.8% of high school students	-	37.8% of Indigenous agreed vs 56.4% of non-Indigenous
If I work hard I will achieve my goals	78.7	-	80.5% of high school students agreed vs 74.8% of primary students	-	-
I find peer group pressures difficult to resist	21.5	-	-	-	32.4% of Indigenous agreed vs 20.8% of non-Indigenous
I feel that people listen to what I have to say	51.7	54.5% of girls agreed vs 49.1% of boys	-	60% of country students agreed vs 49.4% of metro students	-
I have everything I really need	58.2	-	-	67.8% of country students agreed vs 55.7% of metro students	51.4% of Indigenous agreed vs 58.8% of non-Indigenous
I get worried when my friends have problems	66.2	79.6% of girls agreed vs 56% of boys	72.5% of primary students agreed vs 65.3% of high school students	-	45.9% of Indigenous agreed vs 67.5% of non-Indigenous
I feel I can make a difference in the world	48.6	-	58% of primary students agreed vs 46.5% of high school students	54.8% of country students agreed vs 47.7% of metro students	-
I would like more say in decisions affecting my life	62.0	69% of girls agreed vs 57.2% of boys	66% of high school students agreed vs 50.4% of primary students	65.4% of metro students agreed vs 53% of country students	54.1% of Indigenous agreed vs 62.5% of non-Indigenous

Happiness Frequency

	Most of the time – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
How often do you feel happy?	62%	-	67.2% of primary students agreed vs 61.3% of high school students	-	51.4% of Indigenous agreed vs 63.1% of non-

	Most of the time – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
					Indigenous

Problem Support

	Yes – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
If you have a problem or are worried about something, is there someone you can talk to about it?	60.3%	**68.2% of girls agreed vs 54.1% of boys**	-	65.2% of country students agreed vs 59% of metro students	**48.6% of Indigenous agreed vs 61.2% of non-Indigenous**
If yes, I speak to*…					
Mum/Dad	72.6%	-	80.2% of primary agreed vs 70% of high	-	**83.3% of Indigenous agreed vs 72.1% of non-Indigenous**
Aunty/Uncle	18.2%	-	**28.4% of primary agreed vs 15.2% of high**	**30.7% of country agreed vs 15.4% of metro**	**44.4% of Indigenous agreed vs 16.8% of non-Indigenous**
Grandparent	19.1%	-	**28.4% of primary agreed vs 16% of high**	**29.3% of country agreed vs 16.9% of metro**	**38.9% of Indigenous agreed vs 18% non-Indigenous**
Brother/Sister	39.6%	-	-	**56% of country agreed vs 36.5% of metro**	**50% of Indigenous agreed vs 39% of non-Indigenous**
Cousin	21.7%	-	-	**32% of country agreed vs 18.8% of metro**	**44.4% of Indigenous agreed vs 20.4% of non-Indigenous**
Friend	70.7%	**79.9% of girls agreed vs 62.2% for boys**	-	73.3% of metro agreed vs 66.7% of country	**61.1% of Indigenous agreed vs 71.2% of non-Indigenous**
Teacher	21.1%	-	**38.3% of primary agreed vs 15.6% of high**	26.7% of country agreed vs 19.9% of metro	**33.3% of Indigenous agreed vs 20.4% of non-Indigenous**
Counsellor	7.1%	-	-	-	-

* There are overlaps in respondents in each category.

Bullying

	Yes – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
Have you ever been bullied?	60.8%	-	-	-	**21.6% of Indigenous agreed vs 63.4% of non-Indigenous**
Have you ever bullied someone else?	44.3%	48.7% of boys agreed vs 38.8% of girls	-	-	37.8% of Indigenous agreed vs 44.7% of non-Indigenous

Use of Public Transport

	Yes – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
Do you use public transport?	60.8%	-	**63.1% of high school students said yes vs 47.3% of primary students**	-	-

Safety on Public Transport

	Always feel safe – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
If you use public transport, how safe do you feel when using it in the day?	62.9%	**74.1% of boys felt safe vs 51.3% of girls**	-	-	-
If you use public transport, how safe do you feel when using it at night?	21.3%	**25.9% of boys felt safe vs 15.6% of girls**	65.4% of high school students felt safe vs 59.7% of primary students	-	**38.1% of Indigenous felt safe vs 20.2% of non-Indigenous**

Feeling Safe

How safe do you feel…	Always feel safe – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
At school or TAFE?	72.7%	-	-	-	-
At home?	81.6%	-	-	-	-
In the local community?	56.0%	60.7% of boys always felt safe vs 51.4% of girls	**62% of high school students always felt safe vs 42.7% of primary students**	58.1% of metro students always felt safe vs 51.3% of country students	62.2% of Indigenous always felt safe vs 55.5% of non-Indigenous
At parties/gatherings?	70.8%	73.6% of boys always felt safe vs 68.6%	-	-	-

How safe do you feel...	Always feel safe – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
		of girls			
At sporting events?	74.1%	78.3% of boys always felt safe of girls	**78.6% of high school students always felt safe vs 64.1% of primary students**	-	-
In places where there are lots of young people?	64.3%	66.7% of boys always felt safe vs 61.6% of girls	67.1% of high school students always felt safe vs 58.8% of primary students	-	**75.7% of Indigenous always felt safe vs 63.6% of non-Indigenous**

Your Home

	Really good – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
How do you feel about the home in which you live?	56.7%	59.4% of boys said 'really good' vs 53.3% of girls	-	-	62.2% of Indigenous said 'really good' vs 56.3% of non-Indigenous

Trust Between Adults and Children – Young People

	A lot – Total Sample	Gender (318 boys 255 girls)	Year group (131 primary 426 high school)	Region (451 metro 115 country)	Indigenous/non-Indigenous (37 Indigenous, 545 non-Indigenous)
How much trust do you think adults you know have in children and young people?	53.8%	-	61.1% of primary students said 'a lot' vs 51.9% of high school students	-	-
How much trust do you think adults generally have in children and young people?	32.6%	**38.1% of boys said 'a lot' vs 26.3% of girls**	38.9% of primary students said 'a lot' vs 31.9% of high school students	-	37.8% of Indigenous said 'a lot' vs 32.4% of non-Indigenous
How much trust do you think children and young people have in adults they know?	64.1%	-	-	-	-
How much trust do you think children and young people have in adults generally?	44%	-	-	45% of metro students said 'a lot' vs 40% of country students	**56.8% of Indigenous said 'a lot' vs 43% of non-Indigenous**