



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia



*Caring for the future growing up today*

# Speaking Out About Disability

November 2013

The views of Western Australian children and young people with disability

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### Alternative formats

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**“Us kids with disabilities are strong. I’m a 14 year old girl with dreams and hopes like any other 14 year old except I was wired in a different way. It doesn’t make me any less of a person. I’m just different, but aren’t we all unique?” 14 year-old girl**

## Commissioner’s message



In December 2007, I was appointed the first Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People. The *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* sets out my role, including my responsibility to promote and monitor the wellbeing of all children and young people in Western Australia and to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives.

In carrying out my functions, I must have special regard to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

My role as Commissioner includes advocating and providing opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in public debate and decision making.

During my travel throughout Western Australia I have met children and young people with disability and their families. We have talked about what inspires them, what makes their lives good and what services and supports they need to make their lives better. Children and young people with disability have also taken part in many of the other consultations conducted by my office.

In 2013 I wanted to provide an opportunity for children and young people with disability to speak about issues that they felt were most important. I hope that by recording and collating their views, the community and service providers will gain an insight into the lives of children and young people with disability and the people and places that are important to them, their challenges, and their hopes for the future.

The consultation groups and online survey for this report collected the views of 233 children and young people with disability aged between six and 18 years, from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and locations.

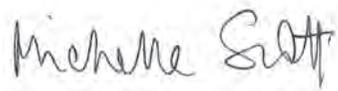
The key issues that children and young people with disability talked about were love and support from their families; enjoying the company of their friends; wanting to be involved and included; wanting to participate in activities; being connected to the community; and a desire to be independent.

In many ways, they have the same views as the majority of children and young people in Western Australia. They also have a disability. In some cases this affects their communication, coordination, senses, thinking processes or mobility. But as they told me, their disability is just one part of their life – they want to be known for who they are, as a person with abilities, talent and potential.

I would like to acknowledge the organisations who undertook the consultations on my behalf, and the teachers, education assistants and support personnel who facilitated the consultations. I also thank parents and carers who assisted and encouraged children and young people to have a say.

I would particularly like to thank the members of the Reference Group who provided advice and expertise during the development of this project.

Finally, thank you to all the children and young people who spoke with me and shared their views, concerns and hopes for the future.



Michelle Scott  
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA



## Introduction

The issues that children and young people with disability said were most important to them were:

- love and support from their families
- enjoying the company of their friends
- wanting to be involved and included
- wanting to participate in activities
- being connected to the community
- a desire to be independent.

Many of the themes and issues raised in this consultation are consistent with the findings of the *Speaking Out About Wellbeing* report, in which almost 1,000 children and young people talked about what was important to their wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

A recurring message from participating children and young people is that their disability is just one part of their life.

They speak about their unique abilities, talent and potential and how they want these attributes to be recognised and to be known for who they are, as a whole person.

### Children and young people with disability in WA

There are close to 560,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years living in Western Australia (WA).

In its most recent survey conducted in 2009, Disability, Ageing and Carers, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 8.3 per cent (1 in 12) of zero to 14 year olds in WA are living with disability.<sup>2</sup>

This is consistent with data from other sources. In 2012 data collected through the WA Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System, approximately 8.9 per cent of children and young people aged zero to 15 had some form of disability.<sup>3</sup>

Data provided by the Disability Services Commission (DSC) identifies 6,667 children and young people in WA as accessing a disability services provider in 2011.<sup>4</sup>

In the DSC 2011 data, Aboriginal children and young people represented 6.3 per cent of clients, and male children were more than twice as likely to access a disability service provider than their female counterparts.<sup>5</sup>

1. Commissioner for Children and Young People 2009, *Speaking Out About Wellbeing: The views of Western Australian children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People  
 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2009*, State Tables for Western Australia, cat. no. 4430.0 [website], viewed 12 December 2012  
 3. Tomlin S and Joyce S 2013, *The Health and Wellbeing of Western Australian Children 2012*, p. 12  
 4. The Disability Services Commission was established in December 1993 under the *Disability*

*Services Act 1993* (WA). It is the State Government agency responsible for advancing opportunities, community participation and quality of life for people with disability. The Commission provides a range of direct services and support and also funds non-government agencies to provide services to people with severe and profound disability, their families and carers. For more information refer to [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/wa/consol\\_act/dsa1993213/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/wa/consol_act/dsa1993213/)  
 5. WA Disability Services Commission 2012, Custom report.

## Methodology

In June 2013, the Commissioner commenced a consultation specifically with children and young people with disability. In developing the approach for the consultation the Commissioner met with the Disability Services Commission and convened a Reference Group comprised of the following members to assist and advise on the consultation:

- Cerys Corrin, Disability Services Commission
- Andrew Jefferson, People with Disabilities WA
- Rosie Keely, Child and Adolescent Health Service
- Terry Simpson, National Disability Services WA
- Jordon Steele-John, Member of the Rockingham Youth Advisory Council
- Adam Sullivan, Red Cross.

Two consultation approaches were adopted to encourage children and young people with disability to participate – an online survey and face-to-face consultations. Both approaches used similar consultation questions which were developed with the assistance of the Reference Group. The questions were then pre-tested with children and young people from Durham Road School and the WA Institute for Deaf Education. Their feedback assisted in the development of the final consultation questions, which asked children and young people:

- What are some of the good things in your life?
- What are some of the things that you find difficult in your life?
- What would you like to tell the Commissioner about children and young people with disability?
- What is great about the town or community you live in?
- What would you change about your town or community? How should we make these changes?
- Who, or what, inspires you? Why?
- What are the most important things you need to have a happy and healthy life?
- Is there anything you need to help you share your views and ideas with other people?
- What are your hopes and dreams for the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell the Commissioner?

### Online survey

The online survey was developed using SurveyMonkey and assessed for disability access by National Disability Services WA. The survey was widely promoted to organisations working with children and young people with disability, Disability Services Commission Local Area Coordinators and on the Commissioner's website.

The survey opened in June 2013 and closed in August 2013, receiving 42 responses from children and young people across WA. Vouchers were offered as incentives for young people to complete the survey. These were awarded to Charlotte, Regan, Morrison and Josef.

### Face-to-face consultations

The Commissioner advertised small grants of up to \$5,000 for organisations working with people with disability to undertake face-to-face consultations with children and young people with disability. This was on the basis that organisations already working with children and young people and their families were well placed to undertake the consultations.

The grants were advertised on 10 June 2013 and organisations were invited to submit an Expression of Interest by 1 July 2013. A Selection Panel was established comprising representatives from the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, National Disability Services WA, the Disability Services Commission and a young person with disability. The Selection Panel assessed each application and made recommendations to the Commissioner regarding which organisations should receive a grant.

The successful organisations were:

- Advocacy Southwest
- Association for the Blind WA

- City of Rockingham
- Edge Employment Solutions
- Inclusion WA
- Kalparrin (Parents of Children with Special Needs Inc)
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
- Senses Australia
- Springboard Youth and Autism Community Centre
- Therapy Focus
- Unitingcare Crossroads
- Wheatbelt Individual and Family Support Association<sup>6</sup>.

The face-to-face consultations involved 191 children and young people with disability in WA. These included Aboriginal children and young people in remote communities in the Western Desert and children and young people from the South-West of WA.

Children and young people involved in the consultations had different disabilities, including sensory, mobility and communication impairments, and learning and intellectual disability.

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<sup>6</sup> Wheatbelt Individual and Family Support Association later withdrew from the consultation project due to staff changes.

## “Sometimes it’s easier to write than to speak.” 16 year-old boy

Each organisation in the face-to-face consultation was provided with the survey questions and a template for reporting. Some organisations modified the questions to suit the children and young people in their group, to ensure they were appropriate for their age and capacity.

### Communication methodologies

Throughout this consultation project a number of alternative methodologies were used to facilitate the involvement of children and young people.

The expertise of the various organisations was central to ensuring children and young people had the opportunity to put their views in a way in which they were comfortable and best able to express them. As a result children and young people were able to use a number of different communication methods during the consultations.

One organisation used an art-based project to help children and young people have their say. Led by a local artist, participants created an art piece based on a circle (symbolising inclusion) incorporating specific lines, colours and shapes. This provided a way for young people to express themselves other than in words.

***“I’m not very good at explaining things in words so I like pictures or music.”*** 18 year-old girl

Several consultations provided opportunities for written feedback as well as face-to-face consultations.

***“Sometimes it’s easier to write than to speak.”***

16 year-old boy

Some consultations involved children and young people recording their views on butcher’s paper and others provided workbooks or worksheets with the questions to allow for written responses.

Technology provided another means of responding. The online survey was developed in collaboration with National Disability Services to ensure that it was accessible for children and young people with disability.

Some consultations used iPads as tools to enhance communication for children and young people.



Children and young people also used symbol-based and picture-based communications.

***“I use my PODD <sup>7</sup> book to help me talk.”*** 11 year-old girl

Talking mats were used in one consultation to assist children with communication difficulties. Pictures representing items, ideas and concepts are attached to talking mats to help support people make their views known.

One consultation used participatory photography, where children and young people were provided with a camera to take photos of their responses to questions.

Other children used interpreters, or the assistance of their parents, carers or assistants to help them have their say in this consultation.

***“My mum has to be my voice cause I am non-verbal.”*** 10 year-old boy

All children and young people whose quotations, artwork or photos are included in this report provided their consent to do so. Consent was also obtained from the parents or guardians of all of the children and young people aged under 18 years who participated in the consultation.



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7 PODD is Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display

**“When I am in hospital or bedridden, I love it when I see my brother. He always makes me laugh.” 15 year-old girl**

## What makes life good?

### Family

Almost all of the children and young people who completed the online survey and participated in the consultations said supportive parents were one of the good things in their lives and family was one of the most important things to have a happy and healthy life. Families were a source of comfort and stability.

**“*[Some good things are] cooking with mum, making a cake with my sister, having fun with dad, like mucking around.*”** 13 year-old girl

**“*My mummy and twin sister and I live with my Nanny and Poppy because my mum can’t afford for us to have our own house, but it’s good because there is always someone who I can ask for help from or talk to.*”** 10 year-old girl

**“*Mum. She knows when something is wrong and how to fix it.*”** 15 year-old girl

**“*I love my mum and brother so much. Although we fight sometimes, I know we always gonna have each other’s backs.*”** 14 year-old girl

**“*My parents [inspire me] because they love me.*”** 14 year-old boy

In addition, families provided support to assist in overcoming or managing the impact of disability.

**“*Having a disability affects the whole family. My family get tired and need a break. My needs come first every day because I need so much help.*”** 13 year-old boy

**“*Mum – she does everything, stays awake so I can sleep.*”** 16 year-old girl

**“*We need more help. Most things are left to our parents. There is not enough help for people with severe disabilities.*”** 12 year-old boy

**“*Sometimes I need help from my parents to express my feelings. I had such a situation today, and thanks to my parents I was able to help express these feelings.*”** 15 year-old boy



Some children and young people said their pets were a positive part of their lives.

***“Jake my dog. He has a certain comforting connection with me and knows when I need cheering up!”*** 15 year-old girl

***“At the hospital there should be a pet visiting room because I missed my pet so much when I was in hospital.”***

14 year-old girl

***“I would love a dog so that I can at least have one friend who will not judge me, or make fun of me.”***

14 year-old girl



Some children mentioned that animals were important in helping them feel better. Children talked about the Riding for the Disabled program which uses riding and horse-related activities to assist people with disabilities. Another young person hoped to start a program using dogs in the classroom to assist young people with learning difficulties.

***“I want to start a program that helps kids who have problems, using dogs in the classroom, so that they can learn better, and not fall behind as much.”*** 14 year-old girl

**“Those with a disability are not limited, it just opens other doors of unimaginable abilities, talent and potential.” 16 year-old boy**

**Inclusion**

Throughout the various consultations, children and young people with disability referred to inclusion and exclusion. This has profound effects on their development and attitudes towards life. The UNICEF report on children with disability notes:

*Children with disabilities encounter different forms of exclusion and are affected by them to varying degrees, depending on factors such as the type of disability they have, where they live and the culture or class to which they belong.*<sup>8</sup>

Children and young people said that they wanted to be treated equally.

***“We are smart but some of us [are] just trapped ... but we have thoughts, feelings and opinions.”*** 10 year-old girl

***“Having a disability doesn’t make us weaker it’s just more challenging. We have to be given a chance and not treated like we are dumb.”*** 15 year-old girl

***“We are all different.”*** 13 year-old boy

***“Children who have cerebral palsy can do lots of things. I have fun, I do outside play time, I do writing, I go swimming and go on the swings at school.”*** 6 year-old girl

***“I am the same as other kids.”*** 8 year-old girl

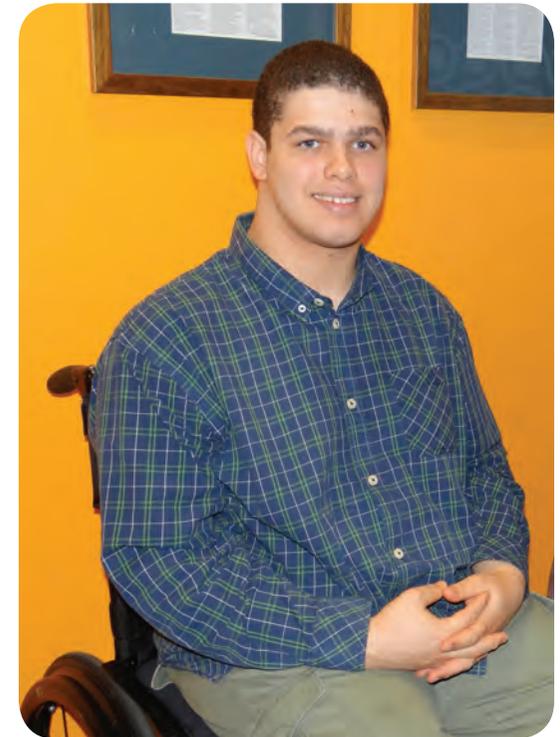
***“Listen to our stories – there is no such thing as normal.”***

14 year-old girl

***“I am important, ask me what I think, I want more choices, I have good ideas, sometimes I need help, everything is good, I am the same as other kids, I want to do the same activities, I am clever.”*** 9 year-old girl

***“Stop using certain terms to refer to us. Treat us as you would other people.”*** 17 year-old boy

***“[To have a healthy and happy life, I need] acceptance, inclusion, to be seen as a person with potential and for help to reach that potential.”*** 12 year-old boy



<sup>8</sup> UNICEF 2013, *The State of the World’s Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*, UNICEF, p.1

Some young people felt directly excluded as a result of disability.

***“I didn’t get to go to my school ball. I had no friends to go with so I didn’t get to. I wished there was something else I could get to do.”*** 17 year-old boy

***“People think that I can’t do certain sports e.g. ride a bike.”***  
participant

***“[It’s difficult] not being able to join my friends in sports.”***  
10 year-old girl

Children and young people were particularly concerned about being treated differently and community attitudes towards them.

***“Being treated differently out in public. Because of my disability I get treated a lot more different and strange.”*** 18 year-old girl

***“Some people don’t get treated right and don’t have anyone to stand up for them. When I had to do work experience I found it difficult to find somewhere to do it and when I did, I wasn’t treated nicely.”*** 15 year-old boy

***“I would like to go to a primary school for kids with autism so I was like everyone else at school but there isn’t one in Perth.”***  
11 year-old girl

***“[What makes me sad?] People looking at me ‘funny’ when I go out.”*** 17 year-old girl



## “Talking with friends always brightens my mood.” 15 year-old boy

### Friends

Many children and young people referred to ‘good friends’. Most children and young people who responded to the online survey felt they had ‘enough good friends’; many in the face-to-face consultations talked about their friends, spending time with them and being part of their lives.

Friends were a source of inspiration, stability, comfort, relationships, fun and acceptance.

*“My friends inspire me.”* 17 year-old girl

*“[Having] friends you can count on [is one of the most important things].”* 14 year-old girl



*“[A good thing is] friends that accept me.”* 13 year-old boy

*“I also love [my] friends, they [are] very nice ... and I don’t know how my school life would be without them.”* participant

*“[A good thing is to] hang out with friends at school.”*  
11 year-old boy

*“[Important things for happy and healthy life include] another person to keep yourself sane.”* 13 year-old boy

*“[The most important things are] friends and great support networks.”* 18 year-old boy

One group reported that being part of a friendship group and able to belong was important to young people. If they could meet up with and interact with their friends it meant that they were enjoying themselves and were able to be independent.

However, some young people identified a lack of friends or supportive friendship networks.

*“[Difficult things in my life are] not having the friendships like my siblings do, not having a supported friendship group like pre-schoolers/school leavers with disabilities do.”* 10 year-old boy

*“[What makes me sad?] Having no friends. When people leave me out.”* 12 year-old girl

**“Sailing. The people that we do it with are understanding of our needs and will make the marks bigger, large buoys with different contrast.” participant**

### Activity

Children and young people with disability want to be involved in hobbies, sports and other activities. They currently participate in a range of activities, some modified to accommodate disability, others developed for people with disability like wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball and goalball.

***“I love acting, drama is my jam, I rock it!”*** 15 year-old girl

***“I’m kinda loving the fact I get to play basketball and I’m glad I got a scholarship for that. I also love singing and music.”***

15 year-old girl

***“The variety youth choir is special to me because I have lots of friends. I am also vocalist in a band.”*** 16 year-old girl

***“Variety Motor Mouth<sup>9</sup> camp [is a good thing].”*** 13 year-old boy

***“Go to the Roller dome or go to AMF bowling.”*** 15 year-old girl

***“Skate park, library, school, karate, scouts.”*** 11 year-old boy

***“I go to boy’s brigade for an activity.”*** 11 year-old boy

***“I like football and basketball. ... We are going to Alice Springs for a football camp next week.”*** 15 year-old boy

***“I play blind cricket.”***

14 year-old boy

Other participants mentioned music, drama, art, various sports including wheelchair rugby and wheelchair basketball, and cadets. Children and young people also referred to unstructured recreation like playing in the park, riding bikes, and going to skate parks.



<sup>9</sup> Variety Motor Mouth camp is held for young people who use augmentative and alternative communication aids and voice output devices

**“I sometimes need help understanding my school work and I have a great teacher in the classroom who explains things carefully to me.” 11 year-old boy**

## School

Many respondents talked about the positive influence of their school. School was important to the children and young people who participated in the consultation and it had a profound influence on their development. It was a place for learning and opportunity, and of course for social interaction with friends.

Some children and young people mentioned particular teachers or education assistants by name, acknowledging the work they did and the influence they have had on them. Some respondents simply acknowledged that school was a good thing for them.

**“Nice and helpful friends and teachers at school.”** 10 year-old girl

**“Coming to Cyril Jackson ESC<sup>10</sup> was the best thing that has happened to me.”** 17 year-old boy

**“Special needs school is great.”** 13 year-old boy

**“I like my school and the fun stuff we do.”** 11 year-old girl

**“The school that I go to is actually pretty good; the people are nice and the services are beyond sufficient for my needs.”**  
15 year-old boy

**“Loves her school Durham Road.”** 10 year-old girl, written by her mother

**“The school I go to is Christchurch and I think it is great because the teachers and boys are very friendly. There is so much to do and every day is different.”** 11 year-old boy

Some respondents talked about disengagement from school or difficulties in school. This is explored below under the Supports section on page 20.



<sup>10</sup> Cyril Jackson ESC is an Education Support Centre

## "My community now recognises me as a person, not a condition." 18 year-old boy

### Being connected

There was a strong sense that children and young people were connected to and part of the community, and this was a positive thing in their lives.

***"Good school links to community ideas and committees."***

18 year-old girl

***"Everyone knows [me] and therefore supports [me]."***

10 year-old boy

***"Growing up with the local children they are more aware of disabilities."*** 13 year-old girl

***"[The most important things are] love, friends and to be included."*** 10 year-old girl

***"It's a lovely community [that I live in] there [are] great people in the neighbourhood."*** 11 year-old boy

***"I would like to say there needs to be more programs or organisations where youth with disabilities can participate in activities within the community so they can reach their full potential."*** 18 year-old girl

***"Make more time to listen to [young people with disability], not our ... parents or carers or support workers or people who are not us."*** 18 year-old girl

***"[The most important things are] support, equipment, services and opportunities to reach my full potential."***

18 year-old boy

Others said that more could be done to enable participation.

***"Consider more grants for young people with disability to participate. Look at opportunities for people to be heard without their parents around. Support transition space for us to talk about how we move from school to work and being taken seriously as adults."*** 18 year-old girl

Many children and young people referred to the role of technology in their lives. Technology cut across all aspects of life – many referred to it in the context of social communication or entertainment; some referred to the role of technology in education and learning; and, importantly in this consultation, some referred to the particular role technology had as a communication tool to overcome disability.

***"I have difficulty talking, I use SMS to talk to my friends."***

15 year-old boy



***“I’m learning Proloquo2Go<sup>11</sup> on the iPad. It is great.”*** 10 year-old boy

***“I am currently learning how to program, so if I could, I would make a video game about my view of the world.”*** 15 year-old boy

***“Technology makes things accessible.”*** participant

One consultation brought together a group of young people with disabilities that affect communication. Many of these participants highlighted computers and iPads as important tools for sharing views and ideas with others. This same consultation used iPads as one of the communication tools for the young people involved.

Social networking came up many times, particularly for older respondents.

***“I love blogging and connecting with other people around the world in similar situations to myself and raising awareness about disabilities through vlogs, blogs and short videos.”***

16 year-old girl

***“My blog and Facebook followers [are good things].”*** 16 year-old girl

As for many young people, entertainment was important. Many mentioned the leading game consoles, computers, and iPads and iPhones.

***“My laptop is my life, I can’t live without it.”*** 15 year-old girl



<sup>11</sup> Proloquo2Go is a Augmentative and Alternative Communication application for Apple portable devices

**“More accessible bus stops. More pedestrian pathways.  
More MAXI cabs.” 18 year-old boy**

## What would you change?

### Access

Access is an ongoing issue for children and young people with disability, primarily those with disability affecting mobility or senses. Some young people talked about examples of places where there was good access but most highlighted examples of poor or limited access.

***“It’s easy to get around in the city because of the tactile markers. They improve our safety.”*** participant

***“I like to go to the movies – it’s always wheelchair accessible”***  
15 year-old girl

***“I want to play sports but no one can take me.”*** 11 year-old boy

***“The physical inaccessibility of many venues and places, including entertainment, leisure, toilets, bus stops, public transport, train stations, shops.”*** 18 year-old boy

***“[How would you change your community?] I would put lifts in every building in Perth and put in more footpaths so that I could wheel around my suburb.”*** 15 year-old girl

***“Some play equipment is hard for me to play on.”*** 11 year-old girl

***“Have more Makaton<sup>12</sup> signs for me to read when I go out into the community.”*** 11 year-old girl

***“Schools need to be made more accessible for everyone. Some schools aren’t accessible to children in wheelchairs.”*** participant

***“I love being in a wheelchair but sometimes it’s hard to go places on my own, and also the bus timetable is not so good, and sometimes when I wanna catch the bus there’s not that many wheelchair buses.”*** 15 year-old girl



<sup>12</sup> Makaton is a communication system using signing and symbols to assist people with communication difficulties

## “People need to know about disabilities, not ignore them.” 10 year-old girl

### Understanding, knowledge and education

Children and young people wanted there to be more understanding and acceptance of disability in the community. Many felt that the lack of appropriate information about disability resulted in misconceptions, misunderstanding and sometimes fear.

*“It would be good if everyone knew what autism is, I can’t explain it. No one knows how hard everything is for me.”*

11 year-old girl

*“Get someone to come in and educate children on disability.”*

10 year-old girl

*“...being accepted more by other people who don’t know me, better awareness AND UNDERSTANDING that I am not like them but still OK and someone that is fun and capable”* 10 year-old boy

*“Just because we have disabilities doesn’t mean we’re unintelligent.”* 14 year-old girl

*“School needs to understand Autism better!”* 16 year-old girl

*“A lot more awareness about Asperger’s.”* 12 year-old boy

*“I would like people to know/have an understanding of exactly what I can/can’t see.”* participant



*“Kids should be able to speak out and present their conditions to the other kids at school.”* 16 year-old girl

*“Communication difficulties, being underestimated in some areas/overestimated in others.”* 10 year-old boy

Some children and young people referred to ‘invisible’ disabilities – where their disability was not immediately evident, they felt there was an assumption that disability did not exist.

*“I find my appearance in ACROD [difficult] because I am mild and people don’t think I have a reason to.”* 10 year-old girl

**“I find it hard at school when I can’t keep up with the other kids in my class when we are doing writing exercises because I don’t write as fast as everyone else.” 10 year-old girl**

## Supports

Some children and young people lacked support for their daily needs. This was particularly noticeable in regional and remote communities.

**“[He] has very limited school attendance, as there is a lack of resources to support his learning. ... [he] needs one on one and there are no resources for this to happen.”** School teacher of 10 year-old boy

**“[He] is not attending school and will be unable to attend until they have a teacher’s aide to assist [him] one on one.”** School in remote community, referring to 11 year-old boy

**“Where has our “My Way” rep gone? Mum is sick of our LACs [Local Area Coordinators] leaving before they have arrived. We need someone to stay for two years at least, not three weeks or three months.”** 10 year-old boy

**“[What would you change?] Better communication and support for small schools. More aide time. More skilled people.”** 10 year-old boy

As most young people who responded were of school age, the focus on support was also on school. While, as noted on page 15, many respondents talked about the positive aspects of school, others referred to the difficulties they encountered. Some children and young people reflected on this.

**“Keeping up with my school work.”** 11 year-old boy

**“I need lots of help at school.”** 10 year-old boy

**“Not enough support to my school from the Education Department.”** 10 year-old boy

**“Being made to ‘fit in’ to mainstream school and learning, but not always getting the correct support or enough modifications at school.”** 10 year-old boy

**“My teachers need A LOT more training and more access to professional development days just for special needs and kids like me.”** 10 year-old boy

Others talked about the need for support into the future. Like many young people, some were considering their post-school path

**“[We need] career counsellors.”** 17 year-old boy

**“Support people to assist getting to TAFE, jobs.”** 17 year-old girl and 18 year-old boy

## “[We] need more things for young disabled children to participate in.” 9 year-old girl

### Activities

The relative lack of access to activities came through in many consultation responses.

*“Hopefully there can be more places in my community where I can play wheelchair basketball.”* 15 year-old girl

*“More funding/helpers for activities for children with and without disabilities.”* 13 year-old girl

*“I would like to say there needs to be more programs or organisations where youth with disabilities can participate in activities within the community so they can reach their full potential.”* 18 year-old girl

*“Need more activities for us to do not in school.”* 12 year-old girl

In one consultation, young people felt that sometimes other people were not allowing them to join in activities that most people took for granted, such as playing sport and participating in groups.

Some children and young people hoped for clubs or activities with other children with disability.

*“Places to get together with other children with disabilities – due to understanding and shared experience.”* 12 year-old girl

*“[We need] more specialised disability groups – recreation/ social.”* 12 year-old boy

*“More places for disabled people/children to play with others. Where they can feel safe and secure and confident.”* 9 year-old girl

*“I think a Kid’s Club would help me and other children who have a disability. A club after school where I could meet other kids with special needs and make new friends and we can talk to each other and then join other clubs together – like athletics.”* 10 year-old girl



**“Help people, be an advocate for disability, speak to groups about what it is like to have a disability.” 15 year-old boy**

## The future

Children and young people had a wide range of hopes, dreams and ambitions for the future. Independence was a particularly strong theme in many responses, particularly those from older young people.

**“My mum hopes that I can live independently and safely.”**  
13 year-old boy

**“To lead an independent life – if possible.”** 10 year-old boy

**“To be happy and have a job.”** 12 year-old girl

**“To further my independence by living in my own home.”**  
18 year-old boy

**“Travel. Me and my friend ... will go around the world in alphabetical order.”** 13 year-old girl

**“To fall in love, get a successful job in science and die a happy old man.”** 18 year-old boy

**“Have my own home, build a house for myself, be a carer.”**  
13 year-old boy

**“Living independently somewhere in the City of Gosnells by myself.”** 18 year-old boy

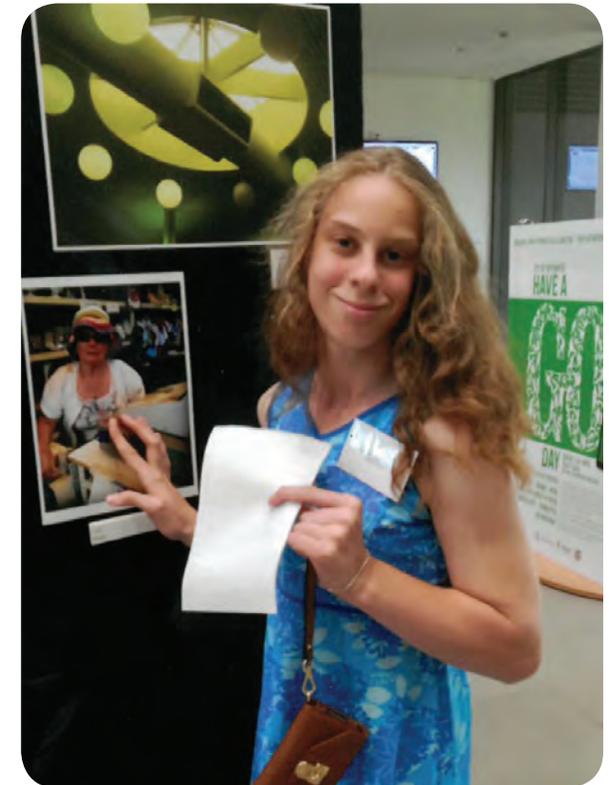
**“If our backyard was bigger, I could build myself a house ... I would live there by myself.”** 12 year-old girl

Some wanted to start programs for children with disability, or work as an advocate.

**“I want to start a program that helps kids who have problems, using dogs in the classroom, so that they can learn better, and not fall behind as much.”**  
14 year-old girl

**“Help other people with disabilities who aren’t coping well and need their voice to be heard. Help them to reach their full potential.”** 18 year-old girl

**“To be part of systems that create change and allow people to be heard in a real way, no lip service.”** 18 year-old girl



*“I’d like to help raise awareness of youth disability issues, see more disabled people positively represented in the media. I would also like to ... make a career for myself working with children with disabilities, possibly through the media.”* 16 year-old girl

Children and young people involved in some consultations wanted to be in helping and caring professions, such as nurses, doctors and teachers. This was also evident in the online survey.

*“To be a police officer and help people.”* 10 year-old girl

*“I want to be a vet. I want to look after animals.”* 6 year-old girl

*“To make my dad proud of me and one day be a nurse.”* 10 year-old girl

*“A doctor ... they help somebody.”* 8 year-old girl

*“[At the moment] I want to teach little kids gymnastics.”* 9 year-old girl

Some children and young people referred to their career ambitions.

*“Train driving.”* 13 year-old boy

*“A career in broadcasting/television.”* 14 year-old girl

*“Working at a café near home.”* 13 year-old girl

*“I want to be a video game developer.”* 15 year-old boy



*“Having a good job after studying Uni. I would like to study web design.”* 18 year-old boy

*“To be a lawyer or judge like my Pop.”* 11 year-old girl

*“Teaching. Writing. Compassion.”* 15 year-old girl

*“I wish to become an awesome EDM<sup>13</sup> producer and to go to Tomorrow land and Ultra and EDC<sup>14</sup>.”* 14 year-old girl

*“I want to be a palaeontologist.”* 10 year-old girl

13 EDM is Electronic Dance Music

14 Tomorrow land, Ultra and EDC are international electronic music festivals

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